

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Evolutionary Origins of Political Ideology:

Mating Strategies, Intergroup Conflict, and the Nature of Political Alliances

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in Psychology

by

David Ross Pinsof

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Professor Martie G. Haselton, Chair

Democracy is new, but politics is older than the human species. In three empirical studies (Chapters 1, 2, and 4) and one theoretical paper (Chapter 3), I integrate research in evolutionary biology with research on political attitudes. The first half of the dissertation applies insights from the evolutionary biology of alternative mating strategies to research on attitudes toward gay rights and abortion policy. I argue that liberal and conservative positions on these issues stem from conflicting mating strategies interacting with specific representations about how these policies, along the groups associated with them, relate to sexual promiscuity. In Chapter 1, I test whether stereotypes of gay men as promiscuous interact with mating strategies (i.e. short-term mating orientation) to predict attitudes toward gay rights. In Chapter 2, I test whether beliefs about the effects of abortion policy on sexual promiscuity—which I refer to as “deterrence beliefs”—interact with mating strategies to predict opposition to abortion. Both hypotheses received empirical support and shed light on the psychological underpinnings of policy preferences. In Chapter 3, I apply insights from the evolutionary biology of alliances and

coalitions to examine political ideologies more broadly. I argue that humans, like other social primates, possess a suite of cognitive adaptations for developing alliances with other individuals and groups based on cues of similarity (e.g. common traits), transitivity (e.g. common enemies), and instrumentality (e.g. common goals). Unlike other primates, humans form complex alliances with overlapping social groups, and apply a suite of cognitive biases designed to defend their allies in conflicts. When partisans apply biases to the demographic groups associated with their political party, they generate biased narratives that form the contents of ideologies (see Chapter 3). In Chapter 4, I test a variety of the predictions entailed by this approach—referred to as the Alliance Theory—using data from the American National Election Study (ANES). I test whether or not the Alliance Theory has better predictive power than alternative approaches—i.e. those that emphasize individual differences in egalitarianism—across a range of different policy disputes. Across all policies examined, the results supported the Alliance Theory and pose a challenge to alternative theories. Taken together, the four chapters yield insights into the origins of political disagreement, and they highlight the utility of taking an evolutionary approach to political psychology.

The dissertation of David Ross Pinsof is approved.

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Chapters 2 and 4 are currently in preparation for publication. Chapter 3 is a version of a manuscript I drafted under the supervision of Martie G. Haselton and David O. Sears, which is also in preparation for publication.

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Pinsof, D., Haselton, M., Sears, D. Why Politics Makes Strange Bedfellows: The Alliance Theory of Political Ideology.

Pinsof, D., M., Sears, D. Equality for All, or for My Allies? Testing the Alliance Theory against Egalitarianism Theories.

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Chapter 1: The Promiscuity Stereotype and Opposition to Gay Rights

Chapter Abstract

Opposition to gay rights is prevalent in countries around the world. Recent correlational research suggests that opposition to gay rights may be driven by an interaction between one's own short-term mating orientation (i.e. willingness to engage in casual sex) and representations of gay people as sexually promiscuous. Here, we experimentally manipulated representations of gay men by randomly assigning participants to read one of two versions of a fictitious newspaper article, one of which contained faux scientific evidence confirming the stereotype that gay men are promiscuous, and the other containing faux scientific evidence refuting the stereotype. We found that the manipulation interacted with short-term mating orientation (STMO) to predict opposition to gay rights, such that low-STMO individuals (i.e. more averse to casual sex) exhibited more support for gay rights when assigned to read the stereotype-refuting article compared to the stereotype-confirming article, whereas high-STMO individuals (i.e. less averse to casual sex) were not significantly influenced by the manipulation. We discuss the implications of these findings for the study of antigay attitudes, as well as for recent societal changes in acceptance of homosexuality.

Despite recent trends towards greater acceptance of homosexuality in the United States, opposition to gay adoption and gay marriage are still common, with 39% and 35% of Americans opposed, respectively (Doherty, 2015; Swift, 2014). Research suggests that the strongest opponents of gay rights tend to be the strongest supporters of marital commitment and family values, and the strongest opponents of divorce and family breakdown (Brumbaugh, Sanchez, Nock, & Wright, 2008; McVeigh & Maria-Elena, 2009; Craig, Martinez, & Kane, 2005; Reyna, Wetherell, Yantis, & Brandt, 2014). Since homosexual relationships do not preclude childrearing or lifelong commitment, these findings are difficult to explain. One might expect supporters of an institution or a way of life to be the most enthusiastic about making it available to more individuals; yet the opposite appears to be the case.

One possible solution to this puzzle relates to differences in *mating strategies* between social liberals and social conservatives. For instance, research has revealed that, relative to social liberals, social conservatives exhibit lower short-term mating orientation (STMO—i.e. interest in casual sex; Tybur, Inbar, Güler, & Molho, 2015; Rowatt & Schmitt, 2003), lower numbers of lifetime sexual partners (Brody et al., 1996; Weeden, Cohen, & Kenrick, 2008), higher rates of marriage (Smith, 2008), younger ages of childbirth (Cahn & Carbone, 2011), more traditional family structures (Monson & Mertens, 2011), and larger family sizes (Hayford & Morgan, 2008). Evolutionary psychologists have theorized that these differences in mating strategies may create conflicts of interest, causing individuals to support the policies and social norms that facilitate their mating strategy (Weeden & Kurzban, 2014, chapter 4; see also Weeden & Kurzban, 2013).

For instance, individuals pursuing the mating strategies typical of social conservatives may be more motivated to condemn sexual promiscuity than their more socially liberal counterparts. For women pursuing this strategy, having a larger number of children at a younger age cannot be as easily achieved without the commitment and financial support of a male-breadwinner. But this leaves women more vulnerable to abandonment: if the relationship dissolves, they are forced to care for a large number of children without adequate resources or career experience. For men, investing greater resources in a larger number of offspring carries opportunity costs (i.e. foregoing short-term mating opportunities) and the possibility of cuckoldry (i.e. diverting time and energy supporting another man's offspring). These two, central risks—i.e. cuckoldry (for men) and abandonment (for women)—may be larger in environments with widespread sexual promiscuity, because such environments are rife with temptations for individuals to stray from long-term relationships. Thus, men and women pursuing the mating strategies typical of social conservatives may be especially concerned about the societal prevalence of sexual promiscuity.

This concern might translate into a *moral heuristic* (Sunstein, 2005; Cosmides & Tooby, 2006) that leads to condemnation of promiscuity or any activity that is perceived to be associated with promiscuity (e.g. partying, wearing revealing clothes, etc.). For instance, if recreational drugs are mentally associated with promiscuity, then sexually conservative individuals may condemn recreational drugs (Kurzban, Dukes, & Weeden, 2012). If access to abortion and contraception are viewed as facilitating sexual promiscuity, then sexually conservative individuals may likewise oppose abortion (Weeden, 2003; Weeden & Kurzban, 2014). Moreover, if sexually conservative

individuals hold implicit or explicit stereotypes of gay people as sexually promiscuous, then they may oppose homosexuality and gay rights (Pinsof & Haselton, 2016). Such opposition may be irrational, because homosexual promiscuity is unlikely to pose a significant threat to heterosexual relationships.

Nevertheless, our evolved psychology may not produce rational attitudes about the kinds of threats (or lack thereof) posed by homosexual promiscuity. Ancestral small-scale societies would have been unlikely to contain large enough aggregations of gay men and women to create the conditions necessary for homosexual promiscuity to occur. For instance, about 2% of individuals in the United States identify as gay or lesbian (Gates, 2011), which implies that an ancestral society of 150 people would have contained about three gay people. The probability of all three of these people belonging to the same sex and age group, much less being attracted to one another, much less recognizing and acting upon these attractions, is low. Moreover, the 2% figure may be an overestimate: evidence indicates that homosexual behavior is significantly less prevalent in hunter gatherer societies compared to agricultural societies, suggesting that homosexual orientation may have emerged in response to more recent selection pressures (Apostolou, 2016). It is therefore plausible that homosexual promiscuity was not a reliable feature of ancestral environments, and that human psychology has not evolved to differentiate between threats posed by homosexual vs. heterosexual promiscuity.

Consistent with these ideas, Pinsof and Haselton (2016) found that representations of gay people as promiscuous play a powerful role in predicting opposition to gay marriage in the United States, particularly among individuals pursuing a sexually conservative mating strategy (measured by STMO). Specifically, the researchers found

that low-STMO individuals exhibit greater opposition to gay marriage than high-STMO individuals, and that this effect is larger among individuals who have stronger mental representations of gay people as promiscuous. Interestingly, both implicit representations (measured using an implicit association test between images of gay couples and words related to promiscuity) and explicit representations (measured using questionnaire items) independently predicted opposition to gay marriage through their interaction with STMO, implying a distinct role for both conscious and unconscious processes. One limitation of this research, however, is that it is correlational and therefore cannot establish that representations of gay people causally interact with STMO to predict opposition to gay marriage. Moreover, the research is limited to attitudes toward gay marriage, and therefore cannot address whether representations of gay people play a broader role in opposition to gay rights and general disapproval of homosexuality.

Here, we expand on this research by experimentally manipulating representations of gay men in order to investigate the possible causal relationship of these representations with opposition to gay rights (e.g. including adoption rights), contingent on variation in mating strategies (measured by STMO). We randomly assigned participants to read one of two fictitious newspaper articles. One version of the article provided faux scientific evidence confirming the stereotype that gay men are promiscuous, whereas the other version of the article provided faux scientific evidence refuting this stereotype. We first sought to test the effectiveness of the newspaper article in manipulating participants' implicit and explicit representations of gay men as sexually promiscuous. We then sought to test the hypothesis that exposure to the article would influence participants' opposition

to gay rights, and that this effect would be larger among low-STMO individuals than high-STMO individuals.

Method

Participants

A total of 1,009 participants were recruited using Amazon's Mechanical Turk. 147 participants were excluded for either failing our attention check or for having more than 10% of their IAT response times below 300 milliseconds (following Greenwald, Nosek, & Banaji, 2003; also following the prior study by Pinsof & Haselton, 2016). The resulting sample was 862 participants, with 386 men and 476 women. Participants' age ranged from 18 to 96, with a mean age of 38 ($SD = 12$). Participants' varied in their relationship status: 27.6% reported being single or casually dating, 22.6% reported being in a relationship or engaged, 43.6% reported being married, and 6.1% reported being divorced or widowed. The majority of participants (91.6%) reported being heterosexual or mostly heterosexual, 4.5% reported being bisexual, and 3.8% reported being homosexual or mostly homosexual. The sample skewed politically liberal, with 51% of participants identifying as at least slightly liberal, 24% identifying as moderate, and 25% identifying as at least slightly conservative. The sample also skewed politically liberal regarding attitudes toward gay rights, with a mean score of 2.5 ($SD = 1.95$) on a 7-point scale, with 1 representing strong support for gay rights and 7 representing strong opposition.

Materials and Procedure

Study design. Participants were randomly assigned to either the stereotype-refuting condition or the stereotype-confirming condition. In the stereotype-refuting

condition, participants were instructed to read a newspaper article providing scientific evidence (which was fabricated) that gay men are equally promiscuous as straight men. In the stereotype-confirming condition, participants were instructed to read an otherwise identical newspaper article providing scientific evidence (which was also fabricated) that gay men are more promiscuous than straight men. In both conditions, participants were not told that the evidence was fabricated. In both conditions, the article was entitled “Are Gay Men Promiscuous?” and contained a picture of a gay couple kissing below the title. In the stereotype-confirming condition, the article began with the text: “There is a common stereotype that gay men are promiscuous. But does the stereotype have any truth to it? Scientific evidence suggests the answer is yes.” In the stereotype-refuting condition, this opening paragraph was identical except for the last sentence, which read: “Scientific evidence suggests the answer is no.” At the end of the study, participants were debriefed and notified that the evidence in the article was fabricated. For access to the articles used in the study, see the supplemental materials.

Explicit representations of gay men as promiscuous. Explicit representations were assessed with four items: “Gay men tend to have more sexual partners throughout their lives than straight men,” “Gay men tend to have more casual sex (i.e. ‘one-night stands’) than straight men,” “In general, gay men tend to be less interested in lifelong, romantic commitment than straight men,” “In general, gay men tend to be less interested in settling down and getting married than straight men.” Participants rated their agreement with the statements on a likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach’s α was 0.97.

Implicit representations of gay men as promiscuous. Our methodology for measuring implicit representations of gay men as promiscuous was identical to the methodology used by Pinsof and Haselton (2016). We used a customized Implicit Association Test (IAT) to measure mental associations between images of gay male couples and words related to promiscuity. Participants were instructed to categorize five words related to either promiscuity (“casual sex,” “hookup,” “horny,” “one-night stand,” and “lustful”) or monogamy (“married,” “devoted,” “faithful,” “loving,” “matrimony”) and five images of either gay male couples or opposite sex couples. If participants’ response times are faster when categorizing both gay couples and promiscuous words, then the concepts of “gay” and “promiscuous” are thought to be mentally associated at the implicit level (see Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). IAT scores represent the mean difference in response times between the two versions of the task—i.e. the version where “gay” and “promiscuous” are paired and the version where “gay” and “monogamous” are paired—in terms of standard deviations. Higher scores on the IAT indicate stronger mental associations between the concepts “gay” and “promiscuous.” For further details on the methodology, see Pinsof and Haselton (2016).

Opposition to gay rights. Participants rated their agreement with four statements relating to gay marriage [“Marriage is between a man and a woman,” “Same-sex marriage undermines the meaning of the traditional family,” “I oppose the legalization of same-sex marriage,” and “Same-sex couples should have the same legal rights to get married as heterosexual couples” (reverse coded)], one statement relating to gay adoption [“Same-sex couples should be prevented from adopting children”], one statement relating to gays in the military [“Gay men and women should be allowed to serve openly in the military”]

(reverse coded)], and two statements relating to general disapproval of homosexuality [“Homosexuality is immoral” and “There is nothing wrong with being gay” (reverse coded)]. Participants rated their agreement with the statements on a likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Factor analysis indicated that a common factor explained 82% percent of the variation of these items. Factor loadings ranged from 0.57 (lowest) to 0.90 (highest), and cronbach’s α was 0.96. We therefore averaged all the items to form a composite measure of opposition to gay rights. When we restricted the measure to only include items used by Pinsof and Haselton (2016)—which pertained specifically to gay marriage—the results remained essentially the same (see appendix to this chapter). Moreover, when we restricted the measure to only include items that were *not* related to same-sex marriage, the results remained essentially the same (see appendix to this chapter).

Short-term mating orientation (STMO). Participants rated their agreement with four statements (Jackson & Kirkpatrick, 2007): “Sex without love is OK,” “I can easily imagine myself being comfortable and enjoying ‘casual sex’ with different partners,” “I could easily imagine myself enjoying one night of sex with someone I would never see again,” and “I could enjoy sex with someone I find highly desirable even if that person does not have long-term potential.” Participants rated their agreement with the statements on a likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach’s α was 0.93.

Suspiciousness of the authenticity of the article. In order to assess whether or not participants thought the newspaper article was real, participants rated their agreement with three statements: “While I was reading the article, I did *not* believe any of the

information in it,” “While I was reading the article, I assumed that the facts were accurate” (reverse coded), “While I was reading the article, I assumed that it was published in a legitimate newspaper” (reverse coded). Cronbach’s α was 0.91.

Results

All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 23. We first present data on participants’ suspiciousness of the article, followed by tests of the effectiveness of the manipulation in altering representations of gay men as promiscuous. Then, we present multiple regression analyses that provide key tests of our prediction that the experimental manipulation (dummy coded as 1 for the stereotype-confirming condition and 0 for the stereotype-refuting condition) would interact with short-term mating orientation to predict opposition to gay rights. We first ran analyses with no exclusion criteria (other than those listed above), followed by moderate exclusion criteria and strict exclusion criteria (see following section).

Suspiciousness of the authenticity of the article. The mean suspiciousness rating was 2.97 ($SD = 1.8$). This value is just below the midpoint of the scale, with a score of 7 indicating strong disagreement that the article was authentic. A substantial number of participants were highly suspicious of the article: 42 participants (5% of the sample) had a score of 7, and 97 participants had a score of 6 or above (11% of the sample). This level of suspiciousness may be common among Mechanical Turk users due to repeated exposure to similar types of manipulations (see Stewart et al., 2015). We were concerned that data from these participants would be less reliable. Accordingly, in the following analyses we have implemented varying levels of exclusion criteria based on participants’ suspiciousness of the article. We define moderate exclusion criteria as removing

participants with a score of 7 (42 participants; 5% of sample), and we define strict exclusion criteria as removing participants with a score of 6 or above (97 participants; 11% of the sample). We present results with the full sample for comparison. We also conducted tests of our key predictions controlling for article suspiciousness as a continuous measure, which yielded similar results (see appendix to this chapter).

Examining the full sample, suspiciousness of the article was negatively correlated with opposition to gay rights in the stereotype-confirming condition ($r = -0.34$, $p < .0001$) and positively correlated with opposition to gay rights in the stereotype-refuting condition ($r = .31$, $p < .0001$). Suspiciousness ratings were higher for the stereotype-confirming article ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.90$) than the stereotype-refuting article ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 1.62$), $t(878) = 6.63$, 95% CI of the difference = $[0.56, 1.02]$, $p < .0001$. This difference may have been due to the fact that our sample skewed pro-gay rights (see section on participant characteristics). For the full sample, the mean suspiciousness rating was 2.97 ($SD = 1.80$); under moderate exclusion criteria, the mean was 2.76 ($SD = 1.60$); and under strict exclusion criteria, the mean was 2.52 ($SD = 1.35$).

Associations between age, gender, STMO, and opposition to gay rights. For the following correlations, we used data from the full sample. We found a significant correlation between STMO and opposition to gay rights ($r = -0.40$, $p < .0001$), such that low-STMO individuals exhibited stronger opposition to gay rights than high-STMO individuals. Age was significantly (albeit weakly) associated with STMO ($r = -0.11$, $p < .01$), with older individuals exhibiting lower STMO than younger individuals. Age was also significantly associated with opposition to gay rights ($r = 0.17$, $p < .0001$), with older individuals exhibiting stronger opposition to gay rights than younger individuals. Women

exhibited lower STMO scores ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.77$) than men ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 2.05$), $t(878) = -12.02$, 95% CI of the difference = $[-1.80, -1.30]$, $p < .0001$. However, we found no significant effect of gender on opposition to gay rights, $t(878) = -0.83$, 95% CI of the difference = $[-0.37, 0.15]$, $p = .41$.

Manipulation check. Examining data from the full sample, participants assigned to the stereotype-confirming condition exhibited stronger explicit representations of gay men as promiscuous ($M = 5.0$, $SD = 1.66$) than participants assigned to the stereotype-refuting condition ($M = 2.3$, $SD = 1.47$), $t(860) = -26.40$, 95% CI of the difference = $[-2.74, -2.31]$, $p < .0001$. As an additional test of the manipulation's effectiveness, we examined differences in IAT scores, which are less susceptible to conscious control (and perhaps less vulnerable to demand characteristics). Examining data from the full sample, participants assigned to the stereotype-confirming condition exhibited higher IAT scores ($M = 0.58$, $SD = .43$) than participants assigned to the stereotype-refuting condition ($M = 0.43$, $SD = .41$), $t(860) = -5.05$, 95% CI of the difference = $[-0.20, -0.08]$, $p < .0001$.

Interaction between the experimental condition and STMO. Consistent with our predictions, we found a significant two-way interaction between the experimental condition and STMO in predicting opposition to gay rights in the full sample ($b = -.17$, $SE = .06$, 95% CI = $[-0.29, -0.05]$, $p < .01$). The size of this interaction was similar under moderate exclusion criteria ($b = -.15$, $SE = .06$, 95% CI = $[-0.27, -0.03]$, $p < .01$), and under strict exclusion criteria ($b = -.17$, $SE = .06$, 95% CI = $[-0.29, -0.05]$, $p < .0001$). Simple slopes tests revealed that, among individuals with STMO scores at one standard deviation below the mean (i.e. low STMO), there was a significant effect of the manipulation on opposition to gay rights in the full sample ($b = 0.61$, $SE = .06$, 95% CI =

[0.50, 0.73], $p < .0001$). This effect was similar under moderate exclusion criteria ($b = 0.65$, $SE = .06$, 95% CI = [0.53, 0.77], $p < .0001$), and slightly larger under strict exclusion criteria ($b = 0.77$, $SE = .06$, 95% CI = [0.65, 0.89], $p < .0001$). Among individuals with STMO scores at one standard deviation above the mean (i.e. high STMO), there was no significant effect of the experimental condition on opposition to gay rights in the full sample ($b = -0.08$, $SE = .06$, 95% CI = [-0.20, 0.04], $p = 0.06$). This effect also failed to reach significance under moderate exclusion criteria ($b = 0.04$, $SE = .06$, 95% CI = [-0.06, 0.16], $p = 0.32$), however the effect became significant (though relatively small) under strict exclusion criteria ($b = 0.10$, $SE = .05$, 95% CI = [0.01, 0.20], $p < .05$). For a graph of the interaction using data from the full sample, see figure 1. In addition, we ran a regression model where we controlled for suspiciousness of the article, and the pattern of results remained essentially the same (see appendix to this chapter).

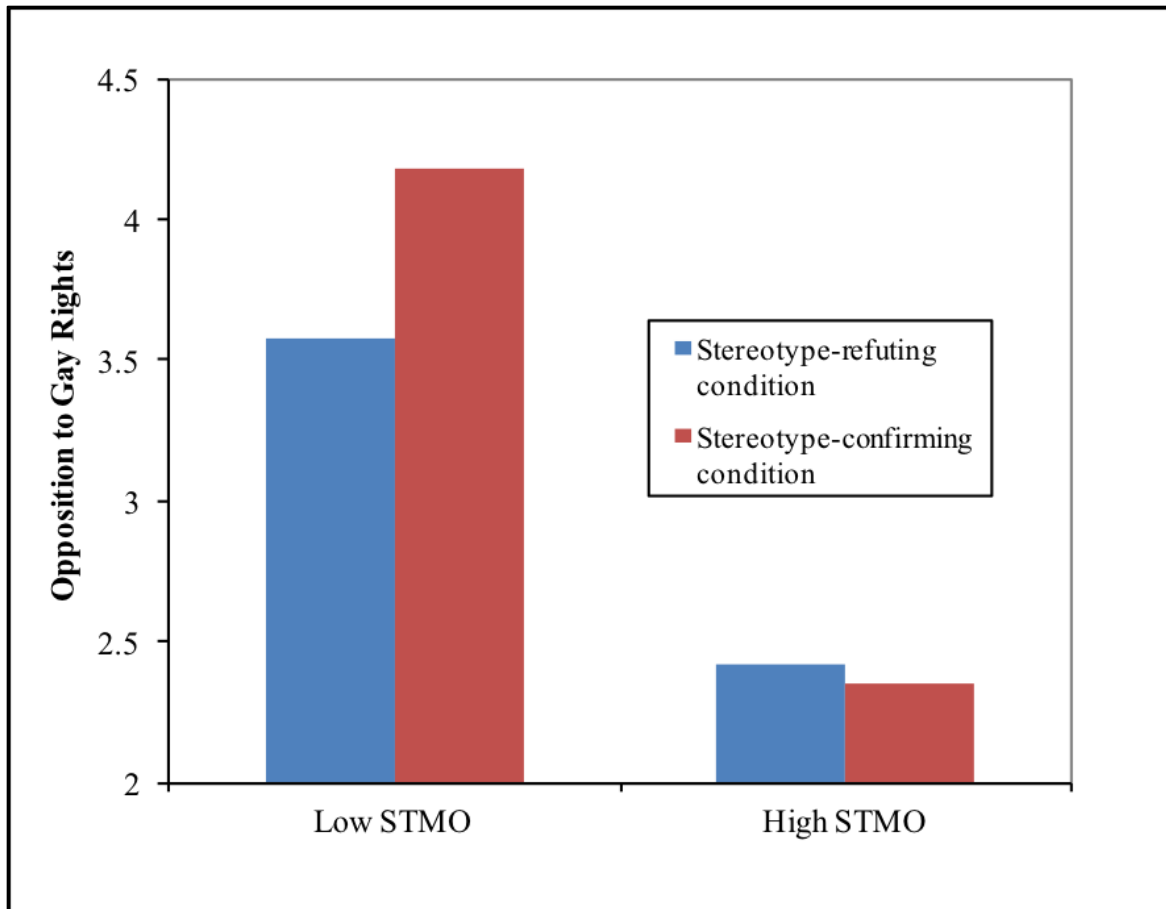


Figure 1. Effect of experimental condition (red vs. blue bars) on opposition to gay rights (y axis) at STMO scores one standard deviation below the mean (low STMO) and at STMO scores one standard deviation above the mean (high STMO).

Discussion

The results support the hypothesis that representations of gay men as promiscuous interact with mating strategies to predict opposition to gay rights. By presenting participants with contrasting versions of a fictitious newspaper article, we were able to successfully manipulate both implicit and explicit representations of gay men as promiscuous. Consistent with predictions, our experimental manipulation interacted with STMO to predict opposition to gay rights. Specifically, low-STMO participants exhibited more support for gay rights in the stereotype-refuting condition than in the stereotype-confirming condition, whereas high-STMO participants exhibited no difference between

the two conditions (though we found a relatively small effect among high-STMO individuals under strict exclusion criteria).

Notably, we were able to influence opposition to gay rights solely by manipulating representations of gay men, as opposed to manipulating representations of both gay men and lesbians. Whether representations of gay men generalize to lesbians, or whether representations of gay men are sufficient to drive opposition to gay rights is a question for future research. We note, however, that representations of lesbians as promiscuous appear to be quite common at the implicit level (mean IAT score = 0.62, see Pinsof & Haselton, 2016), and we find it plausible that such representations could also play a role in opposition to gay rights.

There are, of course, limitations of this research. Our design did not allow us to investigate the temporal duration of the effect of the experimental condition on opposition to gay rights. Future research using longitudinal designs might investigate the temporal robustness of our effects. Moreover, it was not possible for us to determine whether it was STMO in particular—relative to other aspects of mating strategies or their covariates—that caused people to condition their attitudes toward gay rights on representations of gay people as promiscuous. Future research might attempt to experimentally manipulate STMO (e.g. Moss & Maner, 2016), or examine the effects of STMO when controlling for other relevant variables (e.g. disgust sensitivity, political conservatism; see Pinsof & Haselton, 2016).

Our results may have important implications for the study of antigay attitudes. Prior research indicates that antigay attitudes are associated with higher religiosity (Whitley, 2009), higher disgust sensitivity (Olatunji, 2008), and a lower frequency of

contact with homosexuals (Hodson, Harry, & Mitchell, 2009). The ideas guiding our research may provide a parsimonious explanation for all three of these relationships. First, recent research suggests that the primary function of religious institutions across cultures is to facilitate sexually conservative mating strategies—as distinct from promoting other kinds of nonsexual moral concerns (Weeden et al., 2008; Weeden & Kurzban, 2013). Thus, to the extent that homosexuality is viewed as antithetical to the mating strategies promoted by religious institutions, religious individuals may be especially inclined to disapprove of homosexuality and oppose gay rights. Second, higher disgust sensitivity in the sexual domain is related to more sexually restricted (i.e. low STMO) mating strategies and may represent the affective component of such mating strategies (Al-Shawaf, Lewis, & Buss, 2014). Thus, disgust sensitivity may be indirectly related to antigay attitudes by virtue of the role it plays in facilitating sexually restricted mating strategies (Tybur et al., 2015). Third, limited contact with homosexuals may increase the extent to which individuals rely on the promiscuity stereotype in judging same-sex romantic relationships. Increased contact with homosexuals may therefore provide stereotype-refuting information that reduces antigay prejudice. If this is the case, one might expect the relationship between homosexual contact and antigay prejudice to be particularly pronounced among low-STMO individuals, and to be mediated by representations of gay people as promiscuous.

Our findings are consistent with an emerging body of research on the role of “value conflicts” in generating intergroup prejudice (Reyna et al., 2014; see also Chambers, Schlenker, & Collisson, 2013). However, our approach expands on this research by specifying where these values come from, why they contain the contents they

do, why some individuals hold them while others do not, and why they create conflict in particular, as opposed to mere confusion or unfamiliarity (see Weeden et al., 2008; Weeden & Kurzban, 2014). Moreover, our approach leads to testable predictions about when, and in which circumstances, sexually conservative values will emerge (e.g. in ecological contexts favoring long-term mating strategies), potentially shedding light on variation in values across cultures and over time.

For instance, in the United States, acceptance of homosexuality could have emerged as a result of short-term mating strategies becoming more prevalent, and as new cultural values evolved to facilitate these mating strategies. Indeed, research indicates that attitudes toward non-marital sexual behavior have become more lenient in recent decades (Smith, 1994), possibly as a result of ecological factors such as increasing female economic independence (Price, Pound, & Scott, 2014), decreased risk of sexually transmitted diseases (Francis, 2013), and/or changing sex ratios among particular demographic groups (Pedersen, 1991). Whether or not changes in mating strategies coincided with or temporally preceded changes in acceptance of homosexuality is a question for future research.

Another potential cause of increasing acceptance of homosexuality may have been changes in people's representations of same-sex relationships as sexually promiscuous. For instance, early state legalizations of gay marriage could have led to increases in media depictions of committed, family-oriented gay couples, and this could have initiated a positive feedback loop leading to greater acceptance of homosexuality and further increases in state legalizations of gay marriage. To what extent media depictions of committed gay couples are capable of altering representations of gay men

and lesbians—and thereby increasing support for gay rights—is an additional question for future research.

One implication of the ideas guiding this research is that antigay attitudes are far from inevitable. If antigay attitudes are contingent on specific mating strategies interacting with specific mental representations, both of which may be capable of undergoing rapid change, then antigay attitudes may be more of a product of cultural and ecological circumstances than an immutable feature of human nature. Thus, the ideas guiding this research may provide a reason for gay rights activists to be optimistic about the continuing decline of opposition to gay rights.

Appendix: Supplementary Analyses

Interaction between the experimental condition and STMO in predicting opposition to gay marriage. For these analyses, we used a composite of the four items on attitudes toward gay marriage (cronbach's $\alpha = 0.96$) as our dependent measure. We found a significant two-way interaction between the experimental condition and STMO in predicting opposition to gay marriage ($b = -.15$, $SE = .06$, $95\% CI = [-0.27, -0.03]$, $p < .05$). The size of this interaction was similar under moderate exclusion criteria ($b = -.13$, $SE = .07$, $95\% CI = [-0.25, 0.00]$, $p = .06$), and under strict exclusion criteria ($b = -.15$, $SE = .07$, $95\% CI = [-0.28, -0.01]$, $p < .05$). Simple slopes tests revealed that, among individuals with STMO scores at one standard deviation below the mean (i.e. low STMO), there was a significant effect of the manipulation on opposition to gay marriage in the full sample ($b = 0.58$, $SE = .06$, $95\% CI = [0.46, 0.70]$, $p < .0001$). This effect was similar under moderate exclusion criteria ($b = 0.62$, $SE = .06$, $95\% CI = [0.50, 0.74]$, $p < .0001$), and slightly larger under strict exclusion criteria ($b = 0.75$, $SE = .06$, $95\% CI = [0.63, 0.87]$, $p < .0001$). Among individuals with STMO scores at one standard deviation above the mean (i.e. high STMO), there was no significant effect of the experimental condition on opposition to gay marriage in the full sample ($b = -0.03$, $SE = .06$, $95\% CI = [-0.15, 0.09]$, $p = 0.43$). This effect became positive and significant (though relatively small) under moderate exclusion criteria ($b = 0.11$, $SE = .05$, $95\% CI = [0.01, 0.21]$, $p < .05$) and remained similar under strict exclusion criteria ($b = 0.17$, $SE = .06$, $95\% CI = [0.05, 0.29]$, $p < .001$).

Interaction between the experimental condition and STMO in predicting opposition to gay rights and homosexuality (but not gay marriage). For these analyses,

we used a composite of the four items that were unrelated to gay marriage—i.e. gay adoption, gays in the military, and disapproval of homosexuality (cronbach's $\alpha = 0.93$)—as our dependent measure. We found a significant two-way interaction between the experimental condition and STMO in predicting opposition to gay rights and homosexuality ($b = -.19$, $SE = .06$, $95\% \text{ CI} = [-0.30, -.08]$, $p < .01$). The size of this interaction was similar under moderate exclusion criteria ($b = -.18$, $SE = .06$, $95\% \text{ CI} = [-0.29, -0.07]$, $p < .01$), and under strict exclusion criteria ($b = -.19$, $SE = .06$, $95\% \text{ CI} = [-0.31, -.07]$, $p < .01$). Simple slopes tests revealed that, among individuals with STMO scores at one standard deviation below the mean (i.e. low STMO), there was a significant positive effect of the manipulation on opposition to gay rights and homosexuality in the full sample ($b = 0.63$, $SE = .06$, $95\% \text{ CI} = [0.51, 0.75]$, $p < .0001$). This effect was similar under moderate exclusion criteria ($b = 0.68$, $SE = .06$, $95\% \text{ CI} = [0.56, 0.80]$, $p < .0001$), and slightly larger under strict exclusion criteria ($b = 0.79$, $SE = .06$, $95\% \text{ CI} = [0.67, 0.91]$, $p < .0001$). Among individuals with STMO scores at one standard deviation above the mean (i.e. high STMO), there was a small but significant *negative* effect of the experimental condition on opposition to gay rights and homosexuality in the full sample ($b = -0.12$, $SE = .05$, $95\% \text{ CI} = [-0.22, -0.02]$, $p < .05$), with individuals in the stereotype-confirming condition expressing slightly less opposition to gay rights and homosexuality than individuals in the stereotype-refuting condition. This effect, however, dropped below significance under moderate exclusion criteria ($b = -.02$, $SE = .06$, $95\% \text{ CI} = [-0.14, 0.10]$, $p = 0.64$) and remained nonsignificant under strict exclusion criteria ($b = 0.03$, $SE = .06$, $95\% \text{ CI} = [-0.11, 0.15]$, $p = 0.60$).

Interaction between experimental condition and STMO in predicting opposition to gay rights (using all items), controlling for suspiciousness of the article. Using data from the full sample, we found a significant two-way interaction between the experimental condition and STMO in predicting opposition to gay rights ($b = -.17$, $SE = .06$, $95\% CI = [-0.29, -0.05]$, $p < .01$). Simple slopes tests revealed that, among individuals with STMO scores at one standard deviation below the mean (i.e. low STMO), there was a significant effect of the manipulation on opposition to gay rights ($b = 0.61$, $SE = .06$, $95\% CI = [0.50, 0.73]$, $p < .0001$). Among individuals with STMO scores at one standard deviation above the mean (i.e. high STMO), there was no significant effect of the experimental condition on opposition to gay rights ($b = -0.08$, $SE = .06$, $95\% CI = [-0.20, 0.04]$, $p = 0.06$).

Chapter 2: Pro-Life or Anti-Promiscuity? Mating Strategies and Abortion Views

Chapter Abstract

Researchers have argued that abortion attitudes defy self-interest: for instance, women do not support abortion more than men, even though they would presumably benefit from greater freedom over their reproductive decision making. However, prior research has neglected the possibility that abortion attitudes stem from individual differences in *mating strategies* (e.g. interest in casual sex), which differ between men and women. Individuals who are threatened by sexual promiscuity—i.e. individuals pursuing an exclusively long-term mating strategy—may oppose abortion if they believe that unwanted pregnancies (when carried to term) have a *deterrent effect* on sexual promiscuity. Using a large mturk sample (N = 851), we find that these “deterrence beliefs” interact with individual differences in mating strategies to predict opposition to abortion, and that this interaction remains significant even when controlling for religiosity and political orientation. Moreover, we find that mating strategies act as a suppressor variable on gender differences in abortion attitudes: that is, controlling for mating strategies causes a significant gender difference to emerge, with women supporting abortion more than men. Taken together, our results suggest that abortion attitudes derive more from self-interest than has been previously supposed.

Abortion is one of the most divisive issues in American politics. Whereas partisan divides on other “culture war” issues have begun to close in recent decades—e.g. gay marriage, gay adoption (Swift, 2015)—the partisan divide over abortion has remained relatively unchanged for the past 30 years (Gallup, 2016). Religiosity, ideology, race, and education are important demographic predictors of attitudes toward abortion (Jelen & Wilcox, 2003), yet there remains little systematic understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying these attitudes (though see e.g. Huang, Davies, Sibley, & Osborne, 2016).

Attitudes toward abortion are mysterious for a variety of reasons. Supporters of abortion sometimes appeal to principles of personal liberty—that is, they believe a woman should have the right to “do what she wants with her own body” (Weeden & Kurzban, 2014, pp. 60-64). Yet pro-choice people do not appear to hold this principle consistently. For instance, Weeden and Kurzban (2014) argue that “there are plenty of ways in which most pro-choice people otherwise agree that women (and men) should be restricted in what they do with their bodies: seat belt laws, prostitution laws, restrictions on trans fats and giant sodas, mandatory health insurance, and so forth” (p. 63).

Conversely, opponents of abortion tend to center their ethical arguments around the life of the fetus—that is, they believe that a fetus is a person whose rights should be respected. Yet this ethical rationale cannot explain why many pro-life advocates make exceptions for cases of rape or incest (Gallup, 2016). Since there is no reason to think that a child born of rape or incest is less of a person than a child born of consensual sex, the fact that many pro-life people make exceptions for these cases is difficult to explain (Weeden & Kurzban, 2014, pp. 60-64).

Another reason that attitudes toward abortion are puzzling is that they appear to defy self-interest (see Sears & Funk, 1991; p. 39). Abortion has long been conceived of as a feminist issue, with pro-choice activists emphasizing the importance of women's autonomy in making their own decisions about reproduction. Even if the decision to terminate a pregnancy is ethically controversial, one might still expect women to be more supportive of policies that give them greater control over such decisions. Yet a variety of nationally representative polls indicate that women are no more likely to support abortion than men—indeed, in some cases women are slightly *less* likely to support abortion than men (Sears & Funk, 1991, p. 39; Kahn, 2015).

One hypothesis that attempts to resolve these puzzles pertains to differences in mating strategies between liberals and conservatives (Weeden & Kurzban, 2014, chapter 4; Weeden, 2003). That is, conservatives tend to pursue mating strategies that are threatened by sexual promiscuity—they have lower short-term mating orientation (STMO)—and they may support legal restrictions on abortion insofar as they believe that such restrictions will have a deterrent effect on sexual promiscuity. People may believe that access to abortion and other forms of contraception facilitate promiscuity, because they reduce the expected costs of unwanted pregnancies. In other words, people may believe that the prospect of an unwanted pregnancy functions as a *deterrent* against sexual promiscuity, and that removing this deterrent—e.g. via access to abortion—will increase promiscuity. I will refer to such beliefs as *deterrence beliefs*.

This hypothesis predicts a divergence between high and low-STMO individuals in their reasons for supporting or opposing abortion. High STMO individuals are predicted to support abortion for self-interested reasons: that is, they are more likely to pursue

uncommitted sexual relationships that could potentially lead to unwanted pregnancies, and therefore stand to benefit from legal access to a “backup” method of contraception. Low-STMO individuals, on the other hand, are predicted to oppose abortion for deterrence reasons: that is, they are more likely to pursue committed relationships that are threatened by widespread promiscuity, and therefore stand to benefit from policies that impose greater costs on promiscuous behavior. Thus, deterrence beliefs are predicted to influence low-STMO individuals’ attitudes toward abortion, but not high-STMO individuals’ attitudes toward abortion (because they are not threatened by promiscuity).

This hypothesis, if correct, may be able to resolve a variety of puzzles about attitudes toward abortion. First, it might explain why many pro-choice individuals do not extend their support for personal liberty to other policies, because these other policies do not interfere with their ability to postpone reproduction while pursuing short-term sexual relationships. Second, it might explain why conservatives are less opposed to abortion in cases of rape or incest, because rape or incest may be viewed as distinct from sexual promiscuity (Weeden & Kurzban, 2014, pp. 60-64). Third, it might explain why women do not support abortion more than men, because women, on average, have lower STMO than men (Schmitt, 2003), which might cause them to oppose abortion more than they otherwise would. In other words, gender differences in mating strategies may *suppress* countervailing gender differences in attitudes toward abortion, resulting in a null effect of gender.

Whereas prior research has established a robust link between mating strategies and attitudes toward abortion (Weeden & Kurzban, 2014, chapter 4; Weeden, 2003), research has not yet established whether individuals believe that banning abortion would

have a deterrent effect on promiscuity, and if so, whether or not this belief moderates the relationship between mating strategies and opposition to abortion. Such a moderation effect would, in theory, result from considerations of the policy's effects on sexual behavior, and therefore remain significant even when controlling for more abstract ideological variables like religiosity or political conservatism. Moreover, prior research has not tested the hypothesis that STMO suppresses gender differences in attitudes toward abortion, which if true, would challenge the long-standing view that abortion attitudes defy self-interest (see Sears & Funk, 1991, p. 39). In this study, we aim to address these gaps.

Our hypotheses are as follows: 1) mating strategies (measured by STMO) will be strongly related to abortion attitudes, 2) deterrence beliefs will interact with mating strategies to predict abortion attitudes, such that deterrence beliefs will predict greater opposition to abortion for low-STMO individuals but not for high-STMO individuals, 3) this interaction effect will remain significant even when controlling for religiosity and political conservatism, and 4) gender differences in STMO will suppress gender differences in abortion attitudes, such that controlling for STMO will cause a significant gender difference to emerge (with women being more pro-choice than men).

Method

Participants

A total of 851 participants were recruited using Amazon's mechanical Turk.

Materials and Procedure

Deterrence beliefs. Participants were presented with the following three questions:

- 1) “If abortion became strictly banned, do you think women in general would become more willing to have one-night stands or less willing to have one-night stands?” (1 = *Definitely more willing*, 2 = *Probably more willing*, 3 = *Neither more nor less willing*, 4 = *Probably less willing*, 5 = *Definitely less willing*)
- 2) “If abortion became strictly banned, how much more or less frequently do you think one-night stands would occur?” (1 = *Much more frequently*, 2 = *Slightly more frequently*, 3 = *Neither more nor less frequently*, 4 = *Slightly less frequently*, 5 = *Much less frequently*)
- 3) “If abortion became strictly banned, how much more or less promiscuous do you think people in general would become?” (1 = *Much more promiscuous*, 2 = *Slightly more promiscuous*, 3 = *Neither more nor less promiscuous*, 4 = *Slightly less promiscuous*, 5 = *Much less promiscuous*)

Political conservatism. Political orientation was measured on a 7-point scale from 1 (*extremely liberal*) to 7 (*extremely conservative*).

Religiosity. Religiosity was measured by assessing agreement or disagreement with the following statements: “I believe in God,” “I consider myself to be a religious person,” and “Religion is very important to my life.” Participants rated their agreement with the statements on a likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Opposition to abortion. Participants rated their agreement with four statements: “Abortion is a woman’s right” (reverse coded), “There should be tougher restrictions on abortion,” “All women should have easy access to abortion” (reverse coded), and

“Abortion is morally wrong.” Participants rated their agreement with the statements on a likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Short-term mating orientation (STMO). Participants rated their agreement with four statements (Jackson & Kirkpatrick, 2007): “Sex without love is OK,” “I can easily imagine myself being comfortable and enjoying ‘casual sex’ with different partners,” “I could easily imagine myself enjoying one night of sex with someone I would never see again,” and “I could enjoy sex with someone I find highly desirable even if that person does not have long-term potential.” Participants rated their agreement with the statements on a likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Results

All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 23. We will first present data on the predicted interaction between deterrence beliefs and STMO, followed by multiple regression analyses of this interaction when controlling for potential confounds. Finally, we will present results pertaining to the proposed suppressor effect of STMO on gender differences in abortion attitudes.

Interaction between deterrence beliefs and STMO. Consistent with our predictions, we found a significant two-way interaction between deterrence beliefs and STMO in predicting opposition to abortion ($b = -.14$, $SE = .05$, $p < .01$, 95% CI = $-.24$, $-.04$). Simple slopes tests revealed that, among individuals with STMO scores at one standard deviation below the mean (i.e. low STMO), there was a significant effect of deterrence beliefs on opposition to abortion ($b = .74$, $SE = .07$, $p < .0001$, 95% CI = 0.85 , 0.62). Among individuals with STMO scores at one standard deviation above the mean

(i.e. high STMO), there was no significant effect of deterrence beliefs on opposition to abortion ($b = .17$, $SE = .09$, $95\% \text{ CI} = -0.01, 0.32$; see figure 1).

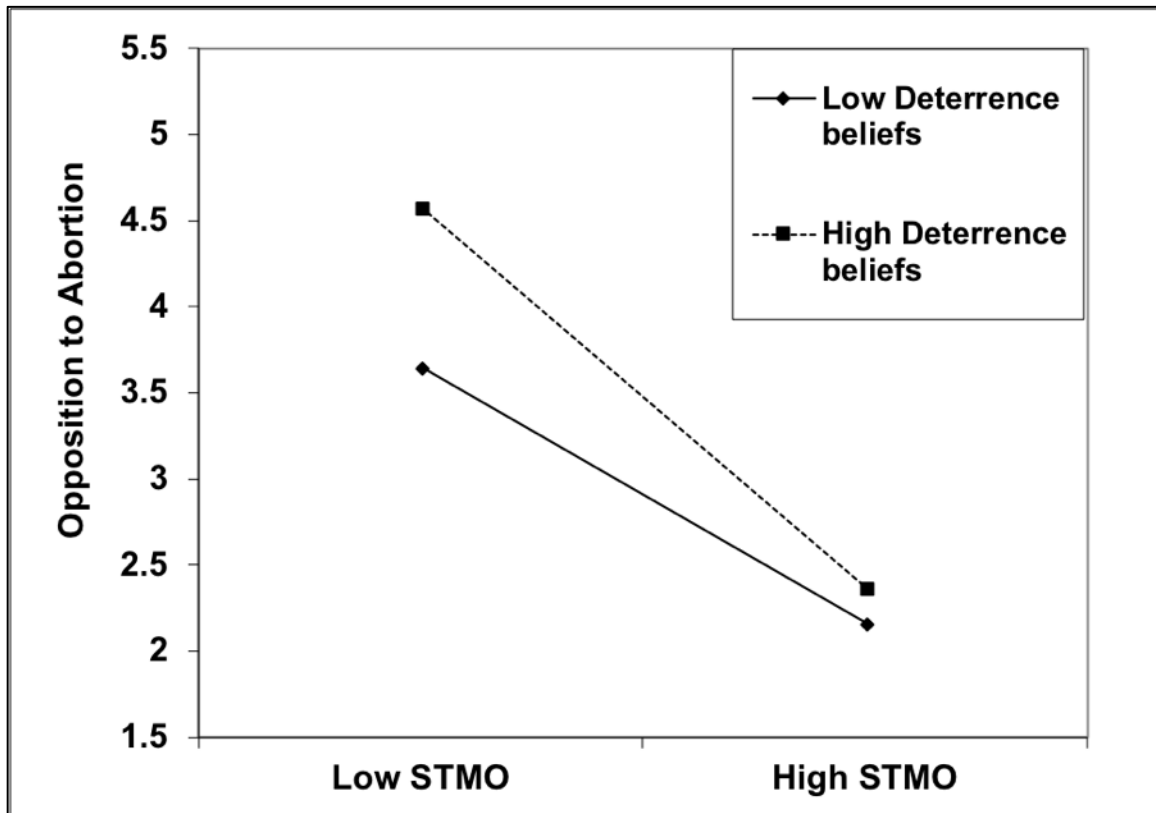


Figure 1. Effect of deterrence beliefs (straight vs. dotted lines) on opposition to abortion (y axis) at STMO scores one standard deviation below the mean (low STMO) and at STMO scores one standard deviation above the mean (high STMO).

Multiple regression analyses controlling for conservatism and religiosity.

Next, we examined the interaction between STMO and deterrence beliefs when controlling for religiosity and political orientation. The interaction remained robust to the inclusion of these variables ($b = -.11$, $SE = .06$, $p < .005$, $95\% \text{ CI} = -.18, -.04$). Simple slopes tests revealed a similar pattern of results to those found in the previous model: among individuals with STMO scores at one standard deviation below the mean (i.e. low STMO), there was a significant effect of deterrence beliefs on opposition to abortion ($b = 0.47$, $SE = .06$, $p < .0001$, $95\% \text{ CI} = 0.59, 0.35$). Among individuals with STMO scores at

one standard deviation above the mean (i.e. high STMO), there was no significant effect of deterrence beliefs on opposition to abortion ($b = -0.11$, $SE = .07$, $p = 0.54$, 95% CI = 0.03, -0.04).

Gender differences in attitudes toward abortion controlling for STMO. We conducted a multiple regression analysis predicting abortion attitudes, with step one including only gender as a predictor, and with step two adding STMO to the model as a covariate. In step one, we found no significant effect of gender on opposition to abortion ($b = .03$, $SE = .14$, $p = .83$, 95% CI = -1.01, -0.48). However, in step two, a significant gender difference emerged, with women supporting abortion more than men ($b = -.75$, $SE = .14$, $p < .0001$, 95% CI = -0.25, -0.32; see figure 2).

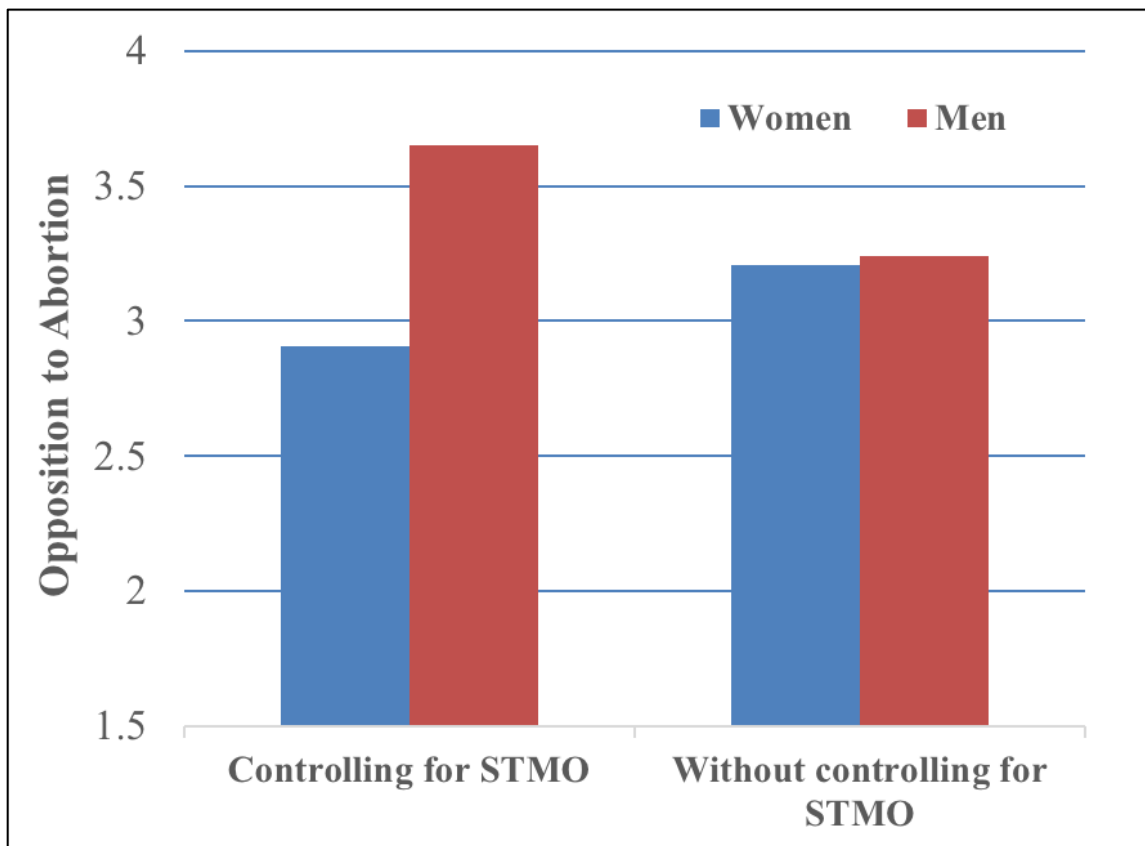


Figure 2. Effect of gender (red vs. blue bars) on opposition to abortion (y axis) controlling for STMO and without controlling for STMO.

Discussion

The results supported our hypotheses: STMO was significantly related to attitudes toward abortion, this relationship was moderated by deterrence beliefs (which predicted opposition to abortion among low-STMO but not high-STMO individuals), and the relationship suppressed an otherwise significant gender difference in attitudes toward abortion (with women supporting abortion more than men). The results are unlikely to be artifacts of more general ideological dispositions like religiosity or political conservatism: the interaction between STMO and deterrence beliefs was robust to the inclusion of these variables. Taken together, the results suggest that strategic conflicts between different mating strategies are an important factor in explaining attitudes toward abortion.

The results have significant implications for our understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying abortion attitudes. Researchers have suggested that attitudes toward abortion are almost “purely symbolic” (see Sears & Funk, 1991, p. 39), having little to do with self-interest. Yet our results challenge this perspective, suggesting that attitudes toward abortion may be fruitfully understood in terms of self-interested motives, including motives for control over personal decisions, unimpeded pursuit of one’s mating strategy, and deterrence of behaviors that are perceived to threaten one’s mating strategy. Rather than being a purely symbolic conflict, abortion may be a more straightforward conflict of interest, with individuals supporting or opposing abortion based on perceptions of how abortion policy affects their lives (even if those perceptions are inaccurate). Since gender is intertwined with mating strategies, then such strategic concerns may mask an otherwise significant gender divide, with women supporting policies that give them greater control over their reproductive decisions.

There are, of course, many limitations to our research. Our correlational design prevents us from clearly establishing causality, and future research might attempt to experimentally manipulate deterrence beliefs, and/or experimentally manipulate mating strategies (e.g. Moss & Maner, 2016; Thomas & Stewart-Williams, 2018). Moreover, we only examined *explicit* deterrence beliefs, and it is possible that some individuals may hold deterrence beliefs at a more implicit, or intuitive level. Rather than holding beliefs about the causal effects of abortion policy on the frequency of sexual promiscuity, individuals may simply have an intuitive sense that women ought to “take responsibility” for their unwanted pregnancies, with little conscious understanding of the logic of deterrence. Similarly, our measure of mating strategies was limited to explicit attitudes about casual sex, and did not tap other relevant aspects of mating strategies, including sensitivity to sexual disgust (Al-Shawaf, Lewis, & Buss, 2015) or dependence on male parental investment (Price, Pound, & Scott, 2014). Future research might benefit from including multiple measures of deterrence beliefs and mating strategies, both implicit and explicit. Nevertheless, the fact that our predictions were confirmed despite the limitations of our measures attests to the promise of our hypothesis as a possible explanation for the political divide over abortion.

Whereas we found support for the hypothesis that abortion attitudes derive from conflicts between rival mating strategies, political attitudes likely derive from multiple causal sources. For instance, political orientation and religiosity emerged as strong predictors of abortion attitudes above and beyond STMO and deterrence beliefs, suggesting that ideological, religious, and/or partisan commitments also play an important role in shaping abortion attitudes. People may support or oppose abortion to

express allegiance to conservatives, liberals, feminists, Christians, atheists, or supporters of traditional family values. Though some of these group identities are, themselves, intertwined with mating strategies (see Weeden, Cohen, & Kenrick, 2008), the group identities are likely to exert a pull above and beyond mating concerns, potentially making abortion attitudes as much about intergroup allegiances as they are about policy content (see Chapters 3 and 4).

Nevertheless, our data suggest that mating strategies cannot be ignored as an important source of variance in explaining attitudes toward abortion. Like other political issues, including recreational drugs (Kurzban, Dukes, & Weeden, 2010) and same-sex marriage (Pinsof & Haselton, 2016), the political divide over abortion may reflect a deeper divide between conflicting mating strategies. This suggests that self-interested motives, often overlooked in studies of political behavior (Weeden & Kurzban, 2017), are more relevant to abortion than has been previously assumed—and may, in fact, hold the key to understanding why the conflict is so intractable.

Chapter 3: The Alliance Theory of Political Ideology

Chapter Abstract

Democracy is new, but politics is older than the human species. Here, we propose a novel theory of political ideology that unites research from social, political, and evolutionary psychology under a common framework. We propose that humans, like other social primates, possess a suite of cognitive adaptations for *alliance formation* that are sensitive to cues of similarity (e.g. common traits), transitivity (e.g. common enemies), and instrumentality (e.g. common goals) when choosing allies. We review evidence that humans apply *propagandistic biases* to their allies in conflicts, including victim biases (e.g. exaggerating their grievances), perpetrator biases (e.g. rationalizing their transgressions), and attributional biases (e.g. attributing their advantages to internal dispositions). When individuals apply these biases to their political allies—e.g. the demographic groups associated with their political party—they generate biased narratives that form the contents of political ideologies. We compare the theory to other widely accepted theories of ideology—including theories of egalitarianism, authoritarianism, and outgroup intolerance—showing how the Alliance Theory can better account for a variety of empirical findings that these other theories struggle to accommodate. Political ideologies, we argue, do not derive from core values, abstract principles, or ethical philosophies, but rather from feelings of allegiance or enmity toward specific groups. We discuss the implications of the theory, including the role of individual differences in political ideology, the difference between politics and morality, and the connection between politics and social life more broadly.

Politics—defined as the negotiation of rules that determine access to resources—is not a recent phenomenon, but has likely existed within the hominid lineage for millions of years (Petersen, 2014; De Waal, 2007). Perhaps the oldest political system is the linear dominance hierarchy, in which resources are preferentially allocated to those with greater fighting ability and seized from those with lesser fighting ability (Hammerstein & Parker, 1982; Kelly, 2008).¹ Among social species, however, fighting ability is derived less from physical strength and more from the number of one's *allies*—i.e. individuals who are prepared to defend oneself in conflicts. Alliances create a new kind of political system, in which resources are preferentially allocated to those with more numerous and loyal allies, and seized from those with scarcer and more fickle allies (De Waal, 2007; Harcourt & De Waal, 1992).

In order to prosper in a world of alliances, individuals must provide credible displays of commitment, develop accurate representations of others' loyalties, and strategically conceal their allegiances from others (De Scioli & Kurzban, 2009; Tooby & Cosmides, 2010; Pietraszewski, 2016). Solving these problems requires a complex set of cognitive abilities possessed only by a small number of highly social species (Harcourt & De Waal, 1992; Chapais, 1995). Many researchers have argued that selection for these abilities, sometimes as referred to as “Machiavellian intelligence,” played an important role in the rapid increase in hominid brain size that occurred during the Pleistocene (Byrne & Whiten, 1988, 1997; Dunbar, 2003).

This line of reasoning has profound implications for the study of political psychology, and forms the foundation of our theory, which we refer to as the Alliance

¹ Though other factors, such as prior ownership and the value of the resource at stake, are also relevant in settling conflicts (Hammerstein & Parker, 1982; Kelly, 2008; see also Hardy & Briffa, 2013).

Theory. Our theory proposes that humans, like other primates, possess cognitive adaptations for alliance formation. These cognitive adaptations are not only applied to one's local friends and rivals, but to the politicians and demographic groups associated with one's political party. Moreover, we propose that humans apply an array of *propagandistic biases* to their allies, including tendencies to a) rationalize their transgressions, b) exaggerate their grievances, c) attribute their advantages to internal dispositions, and d) attribute their disadvantages to external circumstances. These biases—when applied to different demographic groups—give rise to conflicting narratives that form the contents of political ideologies.

In the following section, we review evidence that humans possess a sophisticated alliance psychology, including a suite of propagandistic biases designed to mobilize support for their allies in conflicts. In section three, we review evidence that these biases are readily applied to the demographic groups associated with one's political party, providing a parsimonious explanation for the diverse (and often contradictory) contents of political ideologies. In the fourth section, we compare the theory to four other theories of ideology, demonstrating how the Alliance Theory can better account for existing findings than alternative theories.

Cognitive Adaptations for Alliance Formation

Alliances are a crucial feature of social life among a wide variety of species including macaques, baboons, chimpanzees, dolphins, and hyenas (Harcourt & De Waal, 1992). Animal behavior researchers have documented a diverse array of ritualistic behaviors that appear to signal allegiance, including mutual grooming (Schino, 2006), genital sniffing (Smith et al., 2010), behavioral synchrony (Connor, Smolker, & Bejder,

2006), infant handling (Manson, 1999), and eyeball-poking (Perry, 2012). The benefits of social allies are also well-documented, and they include increased longevity, higher infant survival, and greater reproductive success (Seyfarth & Cheney, 2012; Gilby et al., 2013).

Why has evolution selected for alliance formation in so many different species? The answer is that there is strength in numbers: two individuals are stronger than one, three are stronger than two, and so forth. This provides a strategic advantage to any group of individuals who can commit to defending one another in conflicts. For instance, lower ranking individuals may defend one another to advance their rank (called “revolutionary alliances”); higher ranking individuals may defend one another to maintain their rank (called “conservative alliances”); and lower ranking individuals may defend higher ranking individuals—and vice versa—to achieve both of these ends (called “bridging alliances”; Chapais, 1995). Importantly, this latter phenomenon implies that alliances may transcend social status.

How might individuals choose between different allies? One factor to consider is *transitivity*, or the sharing of allies and enemies, as in the saying “the enemy of my enemy is friend” (Gray et al., 2014). Transitivity is beneficial because it is associated with more stable alliances and less frequent betrayals (Nakamura, Tita, & Krackhardt, 2011; Hiler, 2017). One’s allies are less likely to enter conflicts if they are also allies of one another, and one is less likely to suffer betrayal—i.e. an ally siding with an enemy—if one’s allies share the same enemies (Nakamura et al., 2011; Hiler, 2017; Pietraszewski, 2016). To make oneself a more attractive ally, therefore, one might signal allegiance toward one’s allies’ allies (even if one has no prior allegiance to them), and signal enmity

toward one's allies' enemies (even if one has no prior enmity toward them). As transitivity increases, individuals cluster into groups or "cliques" that share the same allies and enemies (Hiler, 2017; Pietraszewski, 2016). Groups may, in turn, form second-order alliances with other groups, which occur in human hunter-gatherer bands (e.g. Patton, 2005), dolphins (Connor, Heithaus, & Barre, 2001), and possibly among subgroups of chimpanzees (Mitani & Amstler, 2003). A wealth of evidence supports the idea that transitivity plays a powerful role in human relationships at both the individual and group-level, including in adolescent friendships, gang rivalries, and international alliances (Heider, 1958; Rambaran, Dijkstra, Munniksma, & Cillessen, 2015; Huitsing, Snijders, Van Duijn, & Veenstra, 2014; Berger & Dijkstra, 2013; Nakamura et al., 2011; Maoz, Terris, Kuperman, & Talmud, 2006).

Transitivity may be placed within the broader category of *instrumentality*, or the ability of an individual to serve as a means to one's goals (Oherek & Forest, 2016). These goals might involve supporting one's allies and opposing one's enemies, as in transitivity, or they might extend to other domains, like receiving help in times of need (Tooby & Cosmides, 1996), acquiring useful information (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001), and mitigating physical threats (Snyder et al., 2001). According to evolutionary theorists, individuals with mutual instrumentality have a greater "stake" in one another's continued survival and wellbeing (Roberts, 2005; Tooby & Cosmides, 1996), making it adaptive to prioritize their interests over others. Consistent with this logic, perceptions of mutual instrumentality are powerful predictors of closeness in friendships, partnerships, and romantic relationships (see Oherek & Forest, 2016 for a review). Likewise, mutual

instrumentality at the national level (e.g. economic interdependence) is a powerful predictor of alliance formation between nations (Maoz et al., 2006).

Similarity is also an important factor to consider when choosing allies for several reasons. Individuals with similar phenotypes are more likely to share genes, making it adaptive to prioritize their interests (De Bruine, 2002); individuals with similar beliefs and conventions are better able to coordinate to achieve their common goals (Efferson, Lalive, & Fehr, 2008); and individuals with similar personalities enjoy more “synergy” and less friction when working together (Curry & Dunbar, 2013; Cole & Teboul, 2004). Individuals may use “tags,” “markers,” or “identities” to facilitate cooperation between likeminded peers and signal commitment to a group of culturally or temperamentally similar individuals (McElreath, Boyd, & Richerson, 2003; Efferson et al., 2008).

Cues of similarity, transitivity, and instrumentality are likely to play an important role in domestic politics. Members of one’s political party are instrumental to achieving one’s goals (e.g. party victory, political power), share similar characteristics (e.g. beliefs, identities, demographic traits), oppose common enemies (in the opposing party), and support common allies (in the same party). Politicians may therefore compete to attract the support of particular demographic groups, signaling similarity, transitivity, or instrumentality to the demographic groups in question. Research indicates that people intuitively treat political parties as alliances, and that unconscious categorization by political party can interfere with, and thereby dramatically reduce, unconscious categorization by race (Pietreszewski, Curry, Petersen, Cosmides, & Tooby, 2015).

We can think of a *political alliance* as an alliance between two or more subgroups of a political party or coalition. Political alliances might arise naturally, through processes of social assortment and intergroup competition, or they might arise from the top-down, through politicians' attempts to unite different groups against a common, political enemy (Glaeser, 2005). Politicians might frame issues in ways that link their party with the interests of particular groups (Miller & Wlezian, 1993), which might cause partisans to ally themselves with the groups favored by their party, or with the party that favors their group (e.g. Miller, Wlezian, & Hildreth, 1991). Cues of transitivity could override cues of similarity, potentially uniting dissimilar groups—i.e. strange bedfellows—within the same political party.

Defending allies in conflicts

The primary function of an alliance, among both human and nonhuman animals, is mutual assistance in conflicts. Assistance, however, need not involve physical aggression. Many species have evolved to signal support for their allies through vocalizations, with the less supported individual deferring to the more supported individual (Wittig, Crockford, Seyfarth, & Cheney, 2007). Similarly, humans may have evolved to *verbally* signal support for their allies, with the less supported individual deferring to the more supported individual (e.g. Vuchinich, Emery, & Cassidy, 1988). Human infants appear to be innately equipped with expectations that the less numerous side of a conflict will defer to the more numerous side (Pietraszewski & Shaw, 2015). If all humans are equipped with these expectations, then mere *signals of support* can be sufficient to determine the outcome of a conflict.

Human conflicts are, of course, more complicated than majority rule. They are often intertwined with verbal negotiations, in which disputants bargain over possible resolutions and persuade third parties to take their side. Prevailing in verbal conflicts of this sort—e.g. bargaining for more favorable outcomes, attracting a greater number of supporters to one’s side—would have been a powerful selection pressure throughout human evolution, adding new design features to our alliance psychology. Not only would allies be expected to signal their support for one another, they would be expected to *argue* on one another’s behalf (Mercier & Landemore, 2012). Such arguments might appeal to third parties’ moral intuitions, which they rely on when choosing sides in conflicts (Descioli & Kurzban, 2013), or they might be designed to defend their allies’ reputations (and attack their enemies’ reputations). In the following section, we investigate an array of biases—which we refer to as *propagandistic biases*—that may have evolved to serve these functions, and which appear to be essential components of human alliance psychology.

Perpetrator biases

Throughout human evolution, there would have been recurrent conflicts between victims and perpetrators, with “perpetrators” defined as agents who impose large costs on their victims in order to reap small benefits for themselves (Petersen, Sell, Tooby, & Cosmides, 2012). Victims and perpetrators have incompatible preferences regarding punishment and compensation, with victims preferring harsher punishment (and more generation compensation) than perpetrators prefer to incur (or provide). Selection would have favored perpetrators who successfully navigated these conflicts—for instance, by rationalizing, downplaying, or denying their transgressions—thereby minimizing the

punishment and compensation desired by their victims (or by third parties). Likewise, perpetrators' allies may have evolved to exhibit the same biases as the perpetrators themselves (i.e. downplaying their allies' transgressions).

A wealth of research indicates that perpetrators exhibit self-serving biases when asked to describe their transgressions—that is, they tend to downplay their personal responsibility, emphasize the role of mitigating circumstances, embellish their good intentions, and minimize the severity and duration of the harm inflicted upon their victims (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990; Kowalski, 2000; Kearns & Fincham, 2005; see also Schutz and Baumeister, 1999). Crucially, these biases are not confined to the perpetrator. In one study, participants read a story about a transgression, and participants were either instructed to identify with the perpetrator, identify with the victim, or were given no instructions (i.e. the control condition). When asked to retell the story in their own words, participants who identified with the perpetrator tended to exhibit the same biases as the perpetrators themselves (Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997).

Perpetrator biases can also be activated in laboratory participants by inducing feelings of allegiance to a target. In a variety of studies, researchers experimentally manipulated closeness to a target by instructing participants to take the target's perspective, by linking participants' monetary outcomes with the target in an economic game, by informing participants that the target shares their birthday, by having the target describe participants positively in an evaluation form, or by assigning participants to the same arbitrary group as the target. In all cases, the manipulation caused participants to judge the target's unethical behavior—e.g. not paying library fines, not cooperating, not dividing a resource equitably—as less unethical, less unfair, and less blameworthy

(Bocian & Wojciszke, 2014; Schiller, Baumgartner, & Knoch, 2014; Gino & Galinsky, 2012; Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2007).

Victim biases

In the study cited previously on the differing narratives of victims and perpetrators (Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997), participants who identified with the victim *also* produced narratives that differed from the control condition (and from the narratives of perpetrators). For instance, participants who identified with the victim tended to emphasize the perpetrator's personal responsibility for the transgression, attribute the perpetrator's motives to senseless malevolence (i.e. endorsing the "myth of pure evil"; Baumeister, 1999, chapter 3), and exaggerate the severity and duration of the harm inflicted on them (Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997; see also Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990).

Victim biases may function to motivate third parties to punish the perpetrator. That is, the more senselessly malevolent the perpetrator, the more likely she is to harm others in the future, providing third parties with a greater incentive to punish the perpetrator on the victim's behalf (Krasnow, Delton, Cosmides, & Tooby, 2016; Pietraszewski, 2016). Another function may be to induce third parties (or the perpetrator) to contribute resources to the victim. That is, the greater the costs imposed on the victim, the greater the compensation the victim is entitled to (according to the logic of fairness; see Baumard, André, & Sperber, 2013). Consistent with this idea, research indicates that instructing participants to recall past experiences of victimhood causes them to feel more entitled to resources (Zitek, Jordan, Monin, & Leach, 2010).

A variety of studies suggest that people apply victim biases to allies who have suffered transgressions. For instance, researchers varied participants' closeness to the victim of a hypothetical crime, describing the victim as either a family member, classmate, or foreigner. When evaluating the criminal, participants made lower attributions of remorse, made higher attributions of selfishness, estimated higher probabilities of recidivism, and judged the crime as more severe when the victim was socially close to the participant (Linke, 2012; Lieberman & Linke, 2007). Other research indicates that greater allegiance to a group is associated with decreased forgiveness and increased blame for harm directed at fellow group members (Brown, Wohl, & Exline, 2008; see also Schiller, Baumgartner, & Knoch, 2014).

Attributional biases

Throughout human evolution, there would have also been recurrent conflicts between haves and have-nots, with “haves” defined as individuals who possess certain resources (including social advantages), and “have-nots” defined as individuals who lack those resources. Naturally, haves and have-nots have incompatible preferences, with haves preferring to maintain their advantages and have-nots preferring to remove or acquire their rivals' advantages. A wealth of research indicates that humans negotiate these conflicts by making *attributions*—i.e. judgments about the causes of social inequities—distinguishing between *internal* causes (e.g. effort or talent) and *external* causes (e.g. luck or circumstances). The ability to distinguish between internal and external causes of advantages may have evolved to help individuals buffer themselves against shared risks (Kameda, Takezawa, Tindale, & Smith, 2002), distribute the benefits

of cooperation in a social market (Baumard et al., 2013), and detect freeriders in collective action (Petersen, 2012).

A large body of research attests to the importance of attributions in resource allocation decisions. People are more motivated to help needy individuals when they are viewed as victims of misfortune, as opposed to lazy or irresponsible (Petersen, 2012; Weiner, Osborne, & Rudolph, 2011). Similarly, people are more likely to demand resources from others when they are viewed as lucky beneficiaries, as opposed to hard workers (Kameda et al., 2002; Baumard et al., 2013). Given these social incentives, it is plausible that individuals have evolved (or learned) to exploit this psychology for their own benefit, attributing their advantages to internal dispositions and their disadvantages to external factors. This idea is consistent with a large body of research on the “self-serving attributional bias” (see Bradley, 1978; Mezulis, Abramson, Hyde, & Hankin, 2004).

An equally large body of research indicates that individuals *also* apply this attributional bias to their allies, attributing their allies’ advantages to internal causes and their allies’ disadvantages external causes (Rantilla, 2000; Sherman, Kinias, Major, Kim, & Prenovost, 2007; Hewstone, 1990; Klein & Kunda, 1992; Sherman & Kim, 2005; Pettigrew, 1979; Forsyth & Schlenker, 1977; Taylor & Doria, 1981; Lau & Russel, 1980). Even the subtlest cues of allegiance can trigger this bias. In one study, researchers informed participants that they would be partners (or competitors) with another individual in a trivia game. Participants who were told they would be partners were more likely attribute their partner’s high score on a quiz to internal factors (i.e. intelligence) than to external factors (i.e. the easiness of the quiz), whereas individuals told they would

be competitors exhibited the opposite pattern (Klein & Kunda, 1992). Other research indicates that individuals apply attributional biases to their allies in the context of larger-scale intergroup rivalries. Athletes are more likely to attribute their team members' successes to internal factors, while attributing the team members' failures to external factors, independent of how they evaluate their own performance (Taylor & Doria, 1981; Lau & Russel, 1980; Sherman et al., 2007).

In a similar vein, researchers have shown that individuals exhibit a “linguistic intergroup bias,” in which they describe their allies' negative behaviors in concrete terms (e.g. “Bob made a rude comment”) as opposed to abstract terms (e.g. “Bob is rude”). This is analogous to the attributional bias: concrete descriptions imply that the behavior was a one-time occurrence (and likely the product of unique circumstances), whereas abstract descriptions imply that the behavior stems from an internal disposition. Many studies indicate that people describe their fellow group members' positive behaviors abstractly and their negative behaviors concretely across several different group identities (Maass, Salvi, Arcuri, & Semin, 1989; Von Hippel, Sekaquaptewa, & Vargas, 1997; Maass, Milesi, Zabbini, & Stahlberg, 1995).

Section summary

Humans have evolved a sophisticated alliance psychology that is sensitive to cues of similarity, transitivity, and instrumentality when choosing allies. Unlike other primates, humans argue on their allies' behalf, employing a suite of *propagandistic biases*—including victim, perpetrator, and attributional biases—designed to mobilize support for their allies in conflicts. These are the core assumptions of the Alliance Theory

(see figure 1). In the following two sections, we will demonstrate the explanatory power of these assumptions in the context of American politics.



Figure 1. Graphical representation of proposed causal pathway leading to propagandistic biases. The first box represents the environmental cues tracked by psychological systems involved in alliance formation (they are not meant to be exhaustive). Arrows represent causal influence. The third box represents some of the propagandistic biases applied to allies to assist them in conflicts (they are also not meant to be exhaustive).

Cognitive Adaptations for Alliance Formation Are Applied to Modern Politics

Political alliance formation

Given how easily alliances are created in laboratory settings, it would be surprising if our alliance psychology were not strongly activated by modern politics, a context where different demographic groups compete for real-world political power. Political alliances might arise, in part, from the *bottom-up* through social assortment or perceptions of intergroup conflict. In addition, they might arise from the *top-down* through politicians' attempts to gain the support of different voting blocs. Exposure to political rhetoric might create mental associations between political parties and specific demographic groups (Miller & Wlezian, 1993). This might, in turn, cause partisans to ally themselves with groups associated with their political party, even if they have nothing else in common with those groups (Miller, Wlezian, & Hildreth, 1991).

If this line of thinking is correct, then politically engaged partisans—i.e. those who are regularly exposed to political media—will tend to agree on the political

associations of different demographic groups. That is, there will be bipartisan agreement on which groups are more “liberal” and which groups are more “conservative” (but less so among politically unengaged individuals; Zinni, Mattei, & Rhodebeck, 1997).² Moreover, if alliances are shaped by perceptions of similarity, then liberals will feel more allegiance to “liberal” groups and conservatives will feel more allegiance to “conservative” groups. Finally, if alliances are shaped by perceptions of transitivity (i.e. common allies or enemies), then partisans will feel allegiance to *different* groups, and researchers will be able to accurately predict a person’s political identity based on the groups they support or oppose.

In fact, an emerging body of research—using nationally representative samples, student samples, and mturk samples—provides strong support for these hypotheses (Wetherell, Brandt, & Reyna, 2013; Brandt, Reyna, Chambers, Crawford, & Wetherell, 2014; Crawford & Pilanski, 2014; van Prooijen, Krouwel, Boiten, & Eendebak, 2015; Chambers, Schlenker, & Collisson, 2013; Crawford, Kay, & Duke, 2015). Partisans, particularly those who are politically engaged,³ exhibit sharply contrasting feelings toward a variety of different demographic groups. For example, liberals have more positive attitudes toward African Americans, Latinos, young people, women, and atheists; whereas conservatives have more positive attitudes toward business people, the elderly, the military, men, and Christian fundamentalists (see figures 2 and 3). There is also surprising agreement between liberals and conservatives about which groups are

² For individuals who are less politically engaged, political alliances may be more of a product of bottom-up processes, and may therefore lack ideological consistency (i.e. they may feel allegiance to some groups commonly associated with the political right and other groups commonly associated with the political left).

³ The studies tended to find somewhat larger effects among student samples, mturk samples (who tend to be more politically engaged; Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012), and when excluding political moderates.

more liberal and which groups are more conservative: the correlation between liberals' and conservatives' ratings is $r = .97$ (Chambers et al., 2013). Group attitudes are, moreover, strongly predictive of political ideology, with effect sizes ranging from 0.8 to 1.2 (Chambers et al., 2013).

We argue that the list of groups depicted in figures 2 and 3 represent some of the key factions of contemporary political conflict, and we will refer back to these groups throughout the remainder of the paper. We would like to stress that this list of groups is not meant to be exhaustive (there are likely many others, "e.g. sexually promiscuous people"; see Chapters 1 and 2; Pinsof & Haselton, 2016). In addition, the attitudinal variables depicted on the y axis (i.e. liking vs. disliking, warmth vs. coldness) are not ideal measures of allegiance, and we encourage researchers to draw upon our approach to develop more theoretically informed measures.⁴ Nevertheless, the conflicting group attitudes in figures 2 and 3 will serve as a useful, preliminary means of testing the Alliance Theory.

How did partisans come to develop the diverging group attitudes in figures 2 and 3? Alliance formation is a complex process, and there is unlikely to be a simple answer to this question. Nevertheless, we will offer some tentative proposals in the final section. Leaving aside this question for now, the literature reviewed in the previous section strongly suggests the following hypothesis: the group attitudes in figures 2 and 3 will be associated with corresponding victim, perpetrator, and attributional biases. In the next section, we review evidence from political psychology that supports this hypothesis. We

⁴A more theoretically-informed measure might tap a) perceptions of transitivity and/or similarity to the groups in question, b) the specific biases that occur as a result of one's feelings of allegiance (i.e. victim, perpetrator, and attributional biases), and/or c) one's willingness to side with the group in conflicts. Such measures would be more directly related to the proposed design features of our alliance psychology.

will then argue that these biases, and the rival narratives they produce, provide a parsimonious explanation for the diverse (and often contradictory) contents of political ideologies.

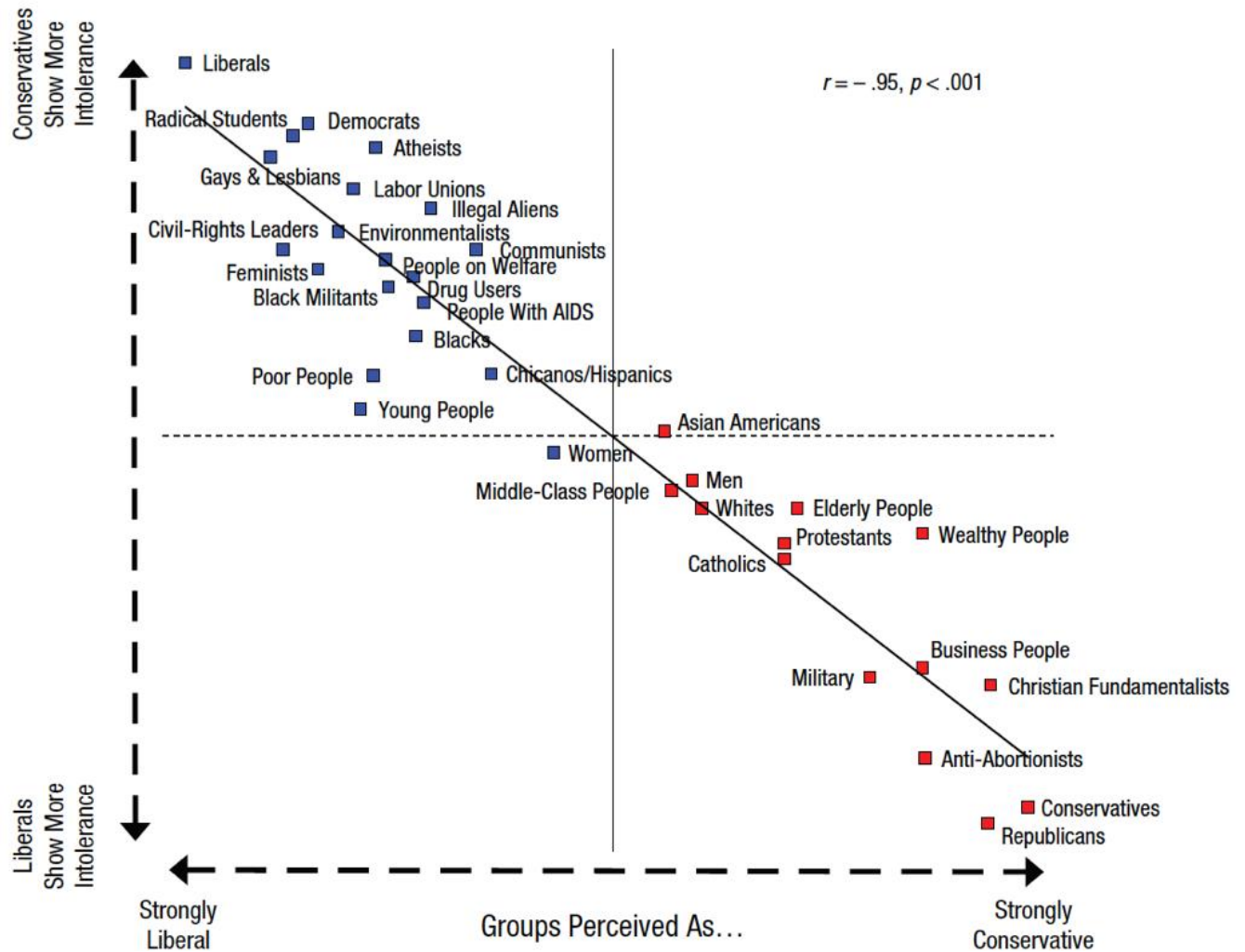


Figure 2. Graph of the relationship between ideological differences in intolerance of groups (y-axis) and perceptions of the political ideology of those groups (x-axis) from Brandt et al., 2014 (data were from an mturk sample collected by Chambers et al., 2013, Study 1, Sample 1). Liberals show greater intolerance of groups perceived as conservative (red data points), whereas conservatives show greater intolerance of groups perceived as liberal (blue data points). The x-axis represents the perceived ideology of the groups on a scale of 1 (*strongly liberal*) to 5 (*strongly conservative*). The y-axis represents the difference between liberals and conservatives' intolerance of the groups on a scale of 1 (*strongly dislike*) to 5 (*strongly like*).

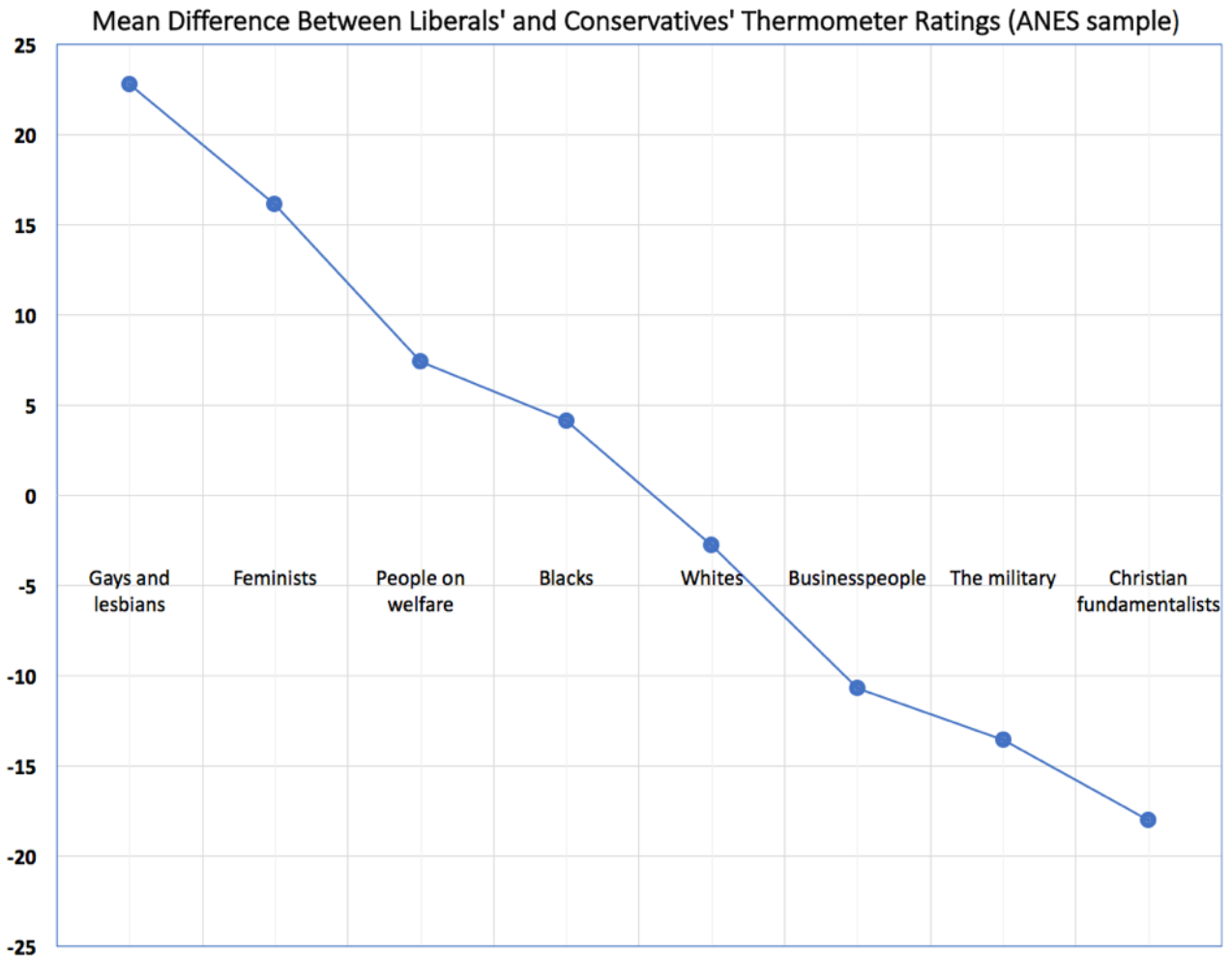


Figure 3. Mean difference between liberals' and conservatives thermometer ratings (*y-axis*) of various social groups (*x-axis*). Data were collected by Chambers et al. (2013; study 1, sample 3) from the American National Election Study (ANES). Thermometer ratings were on a scale of 0 (*extremely cold*) to 100 (*extremely warm*).

Perpetrator biases

Conservatives appear to feel greater allegiance toward white people (see figures 2 and 3); thus, conservatives are predicted to minimize or downplay white people's transgressions, including white people's oppression of African Americans. Indeed, polling data reveals that Republicans, together with white people in general, are far less likely to agree that discrimination against African Americans is currently a problem, that the legacy of slavery contributes to racial disparities in wealth, or that African Americans are entitled to reparations for slavery (Moore, 2014). An alternative interpretation of

these results is that Republicans more likely to rationalize intergroup oppression in general. However, the same poll revealed bipartisan support of reparations for holocaust survivors in Germany, suggesting that perpetrator biases are specific to one's local allies (Moore, 2014).

Conservatives also appear to feel allegiance toward members of the military (see figures 2 and 3); thus, the Alliance Theory predicts that conservatives will be inclined to rationalize military transgressions. Indeed, research indicates that conservatives are less likely to hold the military responsible for unintended civilian casualties, and more likely to judge torture as morally permissible (Ditto, Pizarro, & Tannenbaum, 2009; Tannenbaum, Pizarro, & Ditto, 2007; Crawford, 2012; Norris, Larsen, & Stastny, 2010). An alternative interpretation of these findings is that conservatives are more likely to rationalize intergroup violence in general. However, these same studies indicate that conservatives do *not* rationalize transgressions committed by Iraqis against the American military, suggesting that conservatives use these biases strategically to defend their allies.

Perpetrator biases may also be applied to members of one's political party. Research indicates that liberals judge a variety of ethical violations as less morally wrong when they are committed by Democratic politicians or campaign managers (Claassen & Ensley, 2016; Bryner, 2014; Bhatti, Hansen, & Olsen, 2013; Lebo & Cassino, 2007). During Bill Clinton's adultery scandal, Democrats were far more likely to view the scandal as a right-wing conspiracy, to perceive the House impeachment process as biased, and to preserve their views of Clinton as moral (Miller, 1999; Fischle, 2000). One alternative interpretation is that liberals are inclined to rationalize the ethical scandals of 'elites' in general. However, evidence indicates that liberals display the opposite

tendency—i.e. judging scandals more harshly—when the elites in question are corporate CEOs (Jost, Blount, Pfeffer, & Hunyady, 2003).

Victim biases

Liberals appear to feel allegiance toward a variety historically marginalized groups (e.g. African Americans, women, Latinos; see figures 2 and 3). Thus, liberals are predicted to exaggerate the severity and prevalence of these groups' victimization. Such exaggeration is consistent with the gradual "concept creep" that has occurred for the definition of "prejudice," which has expanded to encompass increasingly subtle, indirect, and unintentional behaviors (Haslam, 2015; Haidt, 2015). Relatedly, individuals have become increasingly motivated to report microaggressions (i.e. intergroup slights), which may function to "attract the attention, sympathy, and intervention of third parties" (Campbell & Manning, 2014, p. 696; see also Lilienfeld, 2017).

Victim biases may also occur among conservatives, albeit toward different groups. Since conservatives appear to feel greater allegiance to men, white people, Christians, and police officers (see figures 2 and 3; see also Ekins, 2016), the Alliance Theory predicts that conservatives will exaggerate any prejudice these groups experience. Indeed, conservatives are far more likely to believe that discrimination against Christians is a serious societal problem (Jones, Cox, Dionne, Galston, Lienesch, 2016, pp. 16-17), that most black people are racist against white people (Rasmussen Reports, 2013), that sexism against men is more prevalent than sexism against women (Bosson, Vandello, Michniewicz, & Lenes, 2012), and that politicians' criticism of police officers threatens their safety (Rasmussen Reports, 2015a). We also find it plausible that belief in a "war on Christmas" stems from similar victim biases (Gibson, 2005). In contrast to these findings,

Republicans are more likely to believe that “people are too easily offended” (Pew Research Center, 2016a).

Attributional biases

Since liberals and conservatives appear to exhibit different feelings of allegiance toward the rich and poor (as well as groups associated with them; see figures 2 and 3), the Alliance Theory predicts a corresponding suite of attributional biases about the causes of wealth and poverty. Consistent with this prediction, conservatives are more likely to attribute wealth and poverty to internal dispositions (i.e. hard work, lack of effort) than external factors (i.e. circumstances beyond one’s control; Pew Research Center, 2014a; Weiner, Osborne, & Rudolph, 2010; see also Chambers, Swan, & Heesacker, 2015). This attributional divide, moreover, echoes a similar divide between the rich and poor themselves: that is, poor people more likely to attribute their poverty to external factors, whereas wealthy people are more likely to attribute their wealth to internal dispositions (Pew Research Center, 2014a).

One alternative interpretation of these results is that liberals are less likely to make internal attributions in general. However, research indicates that liberals are *more* likely to make internal attributions for the reckless behavior of their political enemies—for instance, marines who inadvertently killed Iraqi civilians in response to an attack, police officers who shot an escaped cougar from the zoo, or Republican politicians who failed to provide aid to disaster-struck communities (Morgan, Mullen, & Skitka, 2010; Malhotra & Kuo, 2008; see also Sirin & Villalobos, 2011). Liberals are also more likely to make internal attributions for politicians’ bribery, but only if they are Republicans; and they are more likely to make internal attributions for politicians’ charitable donations, but

only if they are Democrats (Coleman, 2013). Crucially, when individuals make attributions about the behavior of ideologically neutral individuals (e.g. a doctor who tripped), researchers find no partisan differences in attributions (Morgan et al., 2010).

There is also suggestive evidence that external attributions are used by working class white people, who have recently become a prominent voting bloc for the Republican party (Pew Research Center, 2016b). Consistent with this idea, working class white people—and Trump supporters in particular—are more likely to believe that international trade hurts their family’s finances (Pew Research Center, 2016c), that immigrants take jobs away from Americans (Rasmussen Reports, 2015b; Jones et al., 2016), and that white people are disadvantaged by reverse discrimination (Jones et al., 2016, pp 15-17). These beliefs are also more likely to be endorsed by Republicans more broadly, which may reflect a political alliance between working class white people and the Republican Party.

Section summary

Liberals and conservatives endorse a variety of diverse—and sometimes contradictory—beliefs. Conservatives appear to believe that poor people should take personal responsibility for their financial problems (but that working class white people should blame immigration and globalization), that African Americans do not face substantial discrimination (but that Christians do), and that the military’s use of torture is morally permissible (but that Iraqi’s use of torture is reprehensible). Liberals appear to believe that we should protect minority college students (but not police officers in crime-ridden communities) from feeling threatened and unsafe, that Democratic politicians’ scandals are overblown (but that wealthy businesspeople’s scandals are inexcusable), and

that poor people are not personally responsible for their financial problems (but that members of the military are entirely responsible for unintended casualties). What can explain this bewildering variety of beliefs? The Alliance Theory suggests a parsimonious answer: liberals and conservatives have different allies and enemies. When they apply propagandistic biases to their allies and enemies, they generate conflicting narratives that form the contents of ideologies.

As might be apparent, these beliefs need not be logically coherent, and they need not possess any moral thread that ties them all together. Whenever multiple groups with divergent interests form alliances, such inconsistencies are bound to arise (for additional inconsistencies, see table 5). This lack of coherence, however, is difficult to reconcile with the view that ideologies are centered on abstract moral principles—e.g. compassion, tolerance, hierarchy, or equality. In the following section, we critically examine each of these principles, teasing apart the Alliance Theory from alternative approaches. We conclude by arguing that ideologies are better explained by alliances than by moral principles.

Comparing the Alliance Theory to Alternative Theories

Bleeding Hearts Theory

The idea that liberals are more compassionate, empathic, caring, or altruistic than conservatives is ubiquitous in political psychology (Hirsh, DeYoung, Xu, & Peterson, 2010; Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; McCue & Gopoian, 2000; Zettler & Hilbig, 2010; Farwell & Weiner, 2000). For instance, researchers have argued that liberals rely more on the “harm/care foundation,” a cognitive module that facilitates “caring, protecting, and nurturing vulnerable individuals” (Graham et al., 2009, p. 1031). The idea is intuitive

among members of the lay public as well, who hold stereotypes of liberals as “bleeding hearts” (Farwell & Weiner, 2000). We therefore use the term “Bleeding Hearts Theory” as an umbrella term for this family of ideas. According to the Bleeding Hearts Theory, ideological differences derive from variation in compassion (or other traits related to prosociality).

However, since liberals and conservatives exhibit different feelings of allegiance to the poor (as well as other groups associated with welfare; see figures 2 and 3), partisan differences in compassion can also be explained by the Alliance Theory. Compassion is, after all, crucially dependent on attributions—i.e. whether or not individuals are perceived as responsible for their plight (Weiner et al., 2010). Since partisans apply conflicting attributional biases to their allies, liberals might only feel more compassion for the poor because they are more motivated to attribute their hardship to external factors. If liberals and conservatives made identical attributions, they might show identical levels of compassion.

Accordingly, one way to tease apart the Bleeding Hearts Theory from the Alliance Theory is by holding partisans’ attributional biases constant. One might, for instance, provide a description of a welfare recipient who explicitly admits to being lazy and unwilling to work, or who clearly suffered an unfortunate injury and wants to get back to work. Such clear-cut descriptions might remove any ‘wiggle room’ for attributional biases, thereby reducing partisan differences in compassion. Indeed, researchers have devised such a manipulation, and the results strongly support the Alliance Theory: when a welfare recipient is clearly described as hardworking and unfortunate, or as lazy and unwilling to work, partisan differences in compassion become

statistically insignificant (Aarøe, & Petersen, 2014; Petersen, Sznycer, Cosmides, & Tooby, 2012; see also Petersen, Slothuus, Stubager, & Togeby, 2011). One might object that liberals are more inclined to make external attributions for the poor *because* they are more compassionate. However, as we have shown, liberals do not possess a domain-general tendency to make external attributions: rather, they are only inclined to make these attributions on behalf of their political allies (see pp. 54-55).

Another way to tease apart the Alliance Theory from the Bleeding Hearts Theory is to test whether partisan differences in compassion (or other prosocial traits) track partisan differences in allegiance. That is, liberals may simply care more about the wellbeing of their political allies, as opposed to caring more about needy people in general. As an example, liberals appear to show weaker feelings of allegiance to the elderly than do conservatives (see figure 2), perhaps because the elderly tend to lean conservative on average (Pew Research Center, 2014b), or because social security is symbolically associated with white people (Winter, 2006). Accordingly, the Alliance Theory predicts that liberals will show *less* compassion for the elderly than conservatives. Research from a nationally representative dataset supports the Alliance Theory: liberals do, in fact, show less compassion for the elderly than conservatives (Huddy, Jones, & Chard, 2001; see also Winter, 2006).

According to the Alliance Theory, policy divides are a type of conflict in which people are forced to choose sides. If the majority of one's allies are on one side of the conflict, then people will be powerfully drawn to that side, often irrespective of the details of the conflict. Another way to tease apart the two theories, therefore, is by experimentally manipulating a hypothetical welfare policy along two dimensions: 1)

whether the policy is generally supported or opposed by one's political allies, and 2) whether the policy itself is generous or stingy to the poor. In this case, the Alliance Theory predicts stronger effects for 1) than for 2), whereas the Bleeding Hearts Theory predicts stronger effects for 2) than for 1). These predictions were tested in a series of studies by Cohen (2003), and the results strongly support the Alliance Theory: both liberals and conservatives overwhelmingly favored the policy supported by their allies (i.e. Democrats or Republicans), and the generosity of the policy had no significant effect on either group's preferences. This finding emerged despite large differences between the two policies—e.g. one policy withheld food stamps, daycare, and job training—and despite the fact that the two policies were presented side by side.

Taken together, these findings are difficult to reconcile with the Bleeding Hearts Theory, but they provide substantial support for the Alliance Theory (see table 1). Altruistic motivations do not appear to be impartial but instead crucially depend on one's allegiance to the people in need: liberals express greater altruistic concern for people associated with their political ingroup (the poor) but not people associated with their political outgroup (the elderly). Compassion, moreover, appears to be a byproduct of the attributional biases people apply to their allies: when such biases are held constant, ideological differences disappear. Finally, when policy proposals are designed to pit one's political allegiances against the wellbeing of the poor, one's political allegiances invariably win—a finding that fits better with the Alliance Theory than the Bleeding Hearts Theory.

Dependent variable	Alliance Theory predictions	Bleeding Hearts Theory predictions	Empirical evidence
Altruistic concern	• Will be present when needy individuals are allies (+) • Will be absent when needy individuals are enemies (+) • Will vary as a function of attributional biases (+)	• Will be consistently higher among liberals, regardless of the group in need, and independent of attributional biases (-)	• Cues of support from political allies determine support for altruistic policies (Cohen, 2003) • Liberals show less compassion for the elderly, who lean conservative (Huddy et al., 2001) • No partisan gaps when controlling for attributional biases (Petersen et al., 2012; Petersen et al., 2011; Aarøe et al., 2014)

Table 1. Predictions entailed by the Alliance Theory vs. the Bleeding Hearts Theory. Plus sign (+) denotes positive evidence; minus sign (-) denotes negative evidence.

Tribalism Theory

The idea that conservatives are more tribal, prejudiced, ethnocentric, groupish, or xenophobic is common in the political psychology literature and has taken a variety of forms. For instance, Graham et al. (2009) posited that conservatives rely more on the “in-group/loyalty” foundation, an innate module that evolved to facilitate group cohesion and solidarity. Similarly, Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, and Malle (1994) posited that conservatives are higher in “Social Dominance Orientation (SDO),” defined as “the extent to which one desires that one’s ingroup dominate and be superior to outgroups” (p. 742). Other researchers have argued that conservatives are more patriotic than liberals (Schatz, Staub, & Lavine, 1999; Bealey, 1999) and more intolerant of outgroups (Hodson & Busseri, 2012). All of these studies have found correlations between various measures of tribalism—i.e. ingroup attachment and/or outgroup antipathy—and political conservatism.

These findings, however, are also consistent with the Alliance Theory. Rather than disliking outgroups *in general*, conservatives may simply dislike their particular enemies, including African Americans, the poor, atheists, and gay people (see figures 2

and 3). Indeed, many measures of tribalism appear to be confounded with attitudes toward these specific groups. For instance, the SDO inventory refers to groups that are “inferior” or “at the bottom,” which may call to mind prejudicial descriptions of African Americans or the poor (see Schmitt, Branscombe, & Kappen, 2003). Measures of patriotism may be confounded with feelings of allegiance to white people, as opposed to a sense of loyalty to the country as a whole (Devos & Banaji, 2005; Peña & Sidanius, 2002). And some researchers’ measures of “outgroup prejudice” are simply measures of antipathy toward black people or gay people (e.g. Hodson & Busseri, 2012). Thus, the existing evidence that has been used to support the Tribalism Theory (our umbrella term) is also consistent with the Alliance Theory, in which liberals and conservatives have different enemies.

One area where the two theories make contrasting predictions is political tribalism. If conservatives are *generally* more tribal than liberals, then they will show greater prejudice toward liberals than the other way around. However, if both groups possess the same alliance psychology, then conservatives will show just as much prejudice toward liberals as the other way around. Indeed, a wealth of evidence supports the alliance theory: liberals just as prejudiced toward conservatives as the other way around, and both groups are equally likely to discriminate against one another in hypothetical job applications (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Westwood et al., 2015; see also Pew Research Center, 2016d). Interestingly, the degree of partisan discrimination exhibited by both groups is quite large—in fact, significantly larger than effect sizes for racial discrimination (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015).

Another area where the two theories make contrasting predictions is prejudice toward one's political enemies—i.e. specific groups associated with one's political outgroup. Here, the Tribalism Theory predicts that conservatives will show more prejudice toward their political enemies (e.g. atheists) than liberals will show toward their political enemies (e.g. evangelical Christians). However, recent evidence from several studies failed to support this prediction. When asked to rate a variety of groups that vary in their political associations—e.g. feminists, business people, atheists, Christian fundamentalists, the military, African Americans—liberals expressed more prejudice toward the conservative groups, whereas conservatives expressed more prejudice toward the liberal groups (Chambers et al., 2013; Wetherell et al., 2013; Brandt et al., 2014; Crawford et al., 2015; see also figures 2 and 3). Crucially, conservatives expressed no more prejudice toward their political enemies than liberals did toward their political enemies.

Perhaps the Tribalism Theory is less about political tribalism and more about *ethnic* tribalism. This version of the theory holds that conservatives will be more likely to favor their ethnic group over other ethnic groups. However, a large body of evidence refutes this hypothesis. Instead, ethnic tribalism appears to be common across the political spectrum, and it sometimes predicts more *liberal* policy preferences depending on the ethnic group one belongs to (Kinder & Kam, 2010).⁵ For instance, ethnic tribalism predicts support for affirmative action among African Americans (Kinder & Kam, chapter 6) and support for immigration among Latinos (Kinder & Kam, chapter 10),

⁵ What we are referring to as “ethnic tribalism” is called “ethnocentrism” by Kinder and Kam (2010). However, since their measure only includes attitudes toward ethnic groups (but not political, religious, regional, cultural, or class groups), we think “ethnic tribalism” is a more appropriate label (and it fits better with the section heading).

whereas for other policy issues—e.g. abortion, women’s rights—ethnic tribalism plays no role at all (Kinder & Kam, 2010, chapter 8). Crucially, data taken from nationally representative samples ($N = 4,945$) indicates that ethnic tribalism and conservatism are virtually unrelated ($r = .07$ for full sample; $r = .06$ for white people; Kinder & Kam, 2010, chapter 3).

Another way to tease apart the two theories is by substituting different types of outgroups on otherwise identical policy issues. For example, if conservatives are generally more threatened by foreigners, then it should not matter whether those foreigners are Asian or Latino, as they are both outgroups. However, conservatives appear to exhibit greater feelings of allegiance toward Asians Americans than Latinos (see figure 2), perhaps because Asian Americans are viewed as wealthier or less aligned with the Democratic Party (Abrajano & Hajnal, 2015, pp. 74-75). The Alliance Theory therefore predicts that conservatives will differentiate between Latino and Asian outgroups, exhibiting negative attitudes toward the former but not the latter. Indeed, data from nationally representative datasets indicate that, relative to Democrats, Republicans have more negative attitudes toward Latinos but more *positive* attitudes toward Asian Americans (Abrajano & Hajnal, 2015, chapter 2). Moreover, a large body of evidence suggests that opposition to immigration, and identification with the Republican Party more broadly, is driven by perceptions of threat from Latino—but not Asian—immigrants (Abrajano & Hajnal, 2015).

In a similar vein, the Tribalism Theory predicts that conservatives will tend to have more negative attitudes toward Vladimir Putin, because he is a leader of a foreign outgroup. Yet President Trump has repeatedly expressed positive attitudes toward Putin,

which implies that conservatives—and Trump supporters in particular—may have begun to consider Putin an ally due to the logic of transitivity (i.e. common allies). Consistent with this prediction, Republicans’ support for Putin nearly tripled between 2015 and 2017, the time during which Donald Trump rose to political power and began praising Putin (support rose from 12% to 32%; Gallup, 2017). This finding is more consistent with a flexible alliance psychology than with a domain-general bias against foreigners.

Taken together, these results challenge the Tribalism Theory, but they offer strong support for the Alliance Theory (see table 2). If conservatives were generally more tribal, they would a) express greater favoritism toward their ethnic groups, b) express greater prejudice toward their religious outgroups (e.g. atheists), c) express greater prejudice toward their political outgroups (e.g. liberals), d) express greater prejudice toward groups associated with their political outgroups (e.g. feminists), and e) express greater prejudice toward foreigners in general (including Asian Americans and Russians). Yet a large body of evidence indicates that they do not. Conservatives do not appear to be more tribal, in general, than liberals. They simply dislike their particular enemies, just like their liberal counterparts.

Dependent variable	Alliance Theory predictions	Tribalism Theory predictions	Empirical evidence
Prejudice	• Will be present when evaluating enemies (+) • Will be absent when evaluating allies (+) • Will otherwise be similar across ideologies (+)	• Will be consistently higher among conservatives, regardless of the outgroup or the measure used (–)	• Partisans show equal prejudice toward enemies, equal lack of prejudice toward allies (Chambers et al., 2013; Wetherell et al., 2013; Brandt et al., 2014; Crawford et al., 2015; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Westwood et al., 2015; Pew Research Center, 2016d; Abrajano & Hajnal, 2015; Gallup, 2017; YouGov, 2017; Brandt, 2017)

Table 2. Predictions entailed by the Alliance Theory vs. the Tribalism Theory. Plus sign (+) denotes positive evidence; minus sign (–) denotes negative evidence.

Authoritarianism Theory

The idea that conservatives are more authoritarian, obedient, or hierarchical has long been prominent in political psychology. The idea originated in 1950 with the publication of *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950), and was revisited by Altemeyer (1981) who posited that conservatives are higher in “right-wing authoritarianism.” More recently, proponents of Social Dominance Theory (SDT) argue that political conservatism is a type of “hierarchy-enhancing” ideology (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994), and Graham et al. (2009) argue that conservatives rely more on the “authority/hierarchy” foundation, an innate module that evolved in the context of primate dominance hierarchies. All of these approaches have documented correlations between a general support for hierarchy and political conservatism.

However, rather than disagreeing about hierarchy in the abstract, partisans may simply disagree about the proper position of specific groups within a hierarchy (Schmitt et al., 2003). Many measures of authoritarianism are, in fact, confounded with attitudes toward specific groups: for instance, the “authority/hierarchy” subscale of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire contains the statements “Men and women have different roles to play in society,” and “If I were a soldier and disagreed with my commanding officer’s orders, I would obey anyway because that is my duty” (Graham et al., 2009). Measures of “right-wing authoritarianism,” moreover, assess attitudes toward people who “criticize the church” or who strictly follow “God’s laws” (Zakrisson, 2005). Given that men, women, the military, Christians, and atheists elicit diverging attitudes from liberals and conservatives (see figures 2 and 3), partisan differences on these measures are also

consistent with the Alliance Theory. That is, conservatives may simply respect the authority of specific groups—namely their allies—more than liberals.

How we might we tease apart the two theories? If the Alliance Theory is correct, then respect for authority will depend on the authority figure in question: conservatives will respect the authority of their allies, whereas liberals will respect the authority of their allies. Moreover, when it comes to groups that are politically neutral, partisans will show little or no difference in their respect for authority. The Authoritarianism Theory, by contrast, predicts that conservatives will show greater respect for a wide range of authority figures, including authority figures that are politically neutral.

In fact, several studies have tested these predictions, and the results strongly support the alliance theory. Whereas conservatives show greater respect for the authority of their political allies (e.g. military personnel, religious leaders) liberals show greater respect for the authority of their political allies (e.g. civil rights activists, environmentalists). Crucially, when it comes to ideologically neutral authority figures (e.g. judges, office managers) partisans show no differences in their respect for authority (Frimer, Gaucher, & Schaefer. 2014). Research also indicates that liberals are *more* likely to respect the authority of the president (i.e. by condemning a rebellious official), but only when the president in question is Barack Obama (Crawford, 2012). Other research suggests that Republicans show *less* respect for a variety of authority figures that are plausibly associated with the political left, including the Internal Revenue Service, the Department of Health and Human Services, the national news media, colleges and universities, and the Environmental Protection Agency (Pew Research Center, 2015, pp. 61 and 126). Moreover, partisans on both sides of the political aisle question the authority

of scientific experts (e.g. climate scientists), but only when the experts challenge their political views (Kahan, Jenkins-Smith, & Braman, 2011). Taken together, these findings suggest that respect for authority is not a domain-general disposition, but instead crucially depends on one's allegiance to the authority figure in question (see also Reicher, Haslam, & Smith, 2012).

Perhaps the Authoritarianism Theory is less about respecting authority figures and more about exercising authority over others—for instance, by restricting their speech. This version of the theory predicts that conservatives will be more motivated to restrict the speech of their political enemies than liberals. However, several studies failed to confirm this prediction. Whereas conservatives are more likely to favor restricting the speech of liberal activist groups, liberals are more likely to favor restricting the speech of conservative activist groups, and both liberals and conservatives are equally likely to favor restricting the speech of their political enemies (Crawford, 2014; Crawford & Pilanski, 2014; Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, & Wood, 1995; Wetherell et al., 2013; Kahan, Hoffman, Braman, & Evans, 2012; van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2016). These results provide no support for the Authoritarianism Theory, but they provide strong support for the Alliance Theory (see table 3).

Dependent variable	Alliance Theory predictions	Authoritarianism predictions	Empirical evidence
Respect for authority	• Will be present when authorities are allies (+) • Will be reversed when authorities are enemies (+) • Will otherwise be similar across ideologies (+)	• Will be consistently higher among conservatives, regardless of authority figure (–)	• Respect depends on whether authority is an ally or enemy (Frimer et al., 2014; Crawford, 2012; Kahan et al., 2011; Pew Research Center, 2015, p. 61 and p. 126) • Partisans show equal respect for neutral figures (Frimer et al., 2014)

Exercise of Authority (restriction of speech)	• Will be present when targets are enemies (+) • Will be reversed when targets are allies (+) • Will otherwise be similar across ideologies (+)	• Will be consistently higher among conservatives, regardless of target (–)	• Partisans show equal support for allies' speech, equal opposition to enemies' speech (Crawford, 2014; Crawford & Pilanski, 2014; Wetherell et al., 2013; Kahan et al., 2012; van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2016; Sullivan et al., 1995)
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Table 3. Predictions entailed by the Alliance Theory vs. the Authoritarianism Theory and the available empirical evidence. Plus sign (+) denotes positive evidence; minus sign (–) denotes negative evidence.

Egalitarianism Theory

Another prominent idea in political psychology is that liberals are more *egalitarian* than conservatives—that is, they prefer greater equality between groups. For instance, Graham et al. (2009) proposed that liberals rely more on the “equality/fairness” foundation, a cognitive module that evolved for negotiating fair divisions of resources. Sidanius and Pratto (2001) propose that political conservatism is designed to “enhance or maintain the degree of social inequality” (p. 741), and Jost et al. (2003) argue that conservatives are more motivated to “justify inequality among groups and individuals” (p. 340). As one scholar put it, “One major criterion continually reappears in distinguishing left from right: attitudes toward equality” (Giddens, 1998, p. 40).

However, when people think about the issue of equality, they are likely to call to mind specific intergroup conflicts—e.g. African Americans vs. white people, rich vs. poor—as opposed to “equality” as an abstract concept. Since liberals feel greater allegiance to groups that are perceived to benefit from equality, then support for equality may simply be a tactic to defend the interests of those groups. This idea is consistent with research showing that support for equality is not a stable trait, but rather switches on or off in different contexts depending on whether equality advances one’s interests (DeScioli, Massenkoff, Shaw, Petersen, & Kurzban, 2014). This idea is also consistent with longitudinal research showing that changes in one’s political allegiances lead to

corresponding changes in support for equality, but *not* the other way around (Goren, 2005).

One implication of this line of reasoning is that many widely used measures of egalitarianism may be confounded with allegiance to liberals, democrats, or their political allies. Of course, this does not mean that measuring egalitarian preferences is impossible. For instance, a more valid measure might pertain to *hypothetical* societies that one might be interested in joining, thereby disconnecting the measure from local intergroup conflicts. If liberals were more interested in joining hypothetical societies with more equal distributions of resources, even if they had no knowledge of what their status would be in these societies, then this would constitute better evidence that they actually have a stronger preference for equality.

In fact, in one study using a nationally representative sample (N = 5,522), just such a measure was devised. When Republican and Democratic voters chose between hypothetical societies with varying distributions of wealth, the researchers found *no partisan difference* in their preference for equality (Norton & Ariely, 2011; see also Norton, Neal, Govan, Ariely, & Holland, 2014). However, in a different task that pertained to ideal levels of equality *in the United States*, the typical partisan gap emerged, with Democratic voters preferring more equality than Republican voters (Norton & Ariely, 2011). These findings are consistent with other research indicating clear consensus among white Americans about the importance of equality in the abstract (i.e. equal opportunity, equal treatment), but substantial disagreement over whether “we’ve gone too far in pushing equal rights” for specific groups, namely women and African Americans (Sears, Henry, & Klosterman, 2000, pp. 91-95). These findings fit better with

the Alliance Theory, which posits that ideological differences derive more from political alliances than from core differences in their moral psychology (see also Starman, Sheskin, & Bloom, 2017).

Another way we might tease apart the Alliance Theory from the Egalitarianism Theory is by substituting different groups on otherwise identical policy items. If liberals only support equality as a tactic to defend their allies, then their support for equality will depend on whether their allies are at a disadvantage. In fact, when researchers presented participants with an insurance policy that resulted in larger premiums for a high-risk neighborhood, participants' support for equal pricing strongly depended on the demographics of the disadvantaged neighborhood. When the neighborhood was described as mostly African American, liberals expressed nearly twice as much support for equal pricing than conservatives. But when the neighborhood was described as mostly white, partisan differences in support for equal pricing became statistically insignificant (Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000, experiment 3).

One might respond that the Egalitarianism Theory is less about unequal outcomes and more about unequal treatment—that is, concerns about *discrimination*. However, if liberals are more concerned about discrimination as a moral principle, then they will be more concerned about discrimination against *all* groups, including men, women, white people, African Americans, atheists, and Christians. The Alliance Theory, by contrast, entails a different prediction: liberals will only care about discrimination against their allies (i.e. women, African Americans, and atheists), whereas conservatives will only care about discrimination against their allies (i.e. men, white people, and Christians). In fact, a variety of nationally representative polls support the Alliance Theory: whereas liberals

are more concerned about discrimination against women, atheists, and African Americans, conservatives are more concerned about discrimination against men, white people and Christians (Jones et al., 2016, pp. 15-17; Moore, 2014; Rasmussen Reports, 2013; Miller, 2017; Bosson et al., 2012; Pew Research Center, 2009⁶; see also Norton & Sommers, 2011).

One alternative interpretation of these findings is that liberals are only concerned about groups that actually struggle with discrimination. However, this interpretation cannot account for why conservatives care more about discrimination against the latter set of groups. If conservatives are generally less concerned about discrimination, then why are they *more* concerned about discrimination against men, white people, and Christians? Another problem with this interpretation is that discrimination against men, white people, and Christians does, at least sometimes, occur (Dutton & Lake, 1973; Fajardo, 1985; Harber, 1998; Nail et al., 2003; Aberson & Ettl, 2004; Norton, Vandello, & Darley, 2004; Croft & Schmader, 2012; Williams & Ceci, 2015; Starr, 2015; Byrd, Hall, Roberts, & Soto, 2015; FeldmanHall et al., 2016; Breda & Hillion, 2016; McDermott, 2009; Wetherell et al., 2013; Campbell, Green, & Layman, 2011). If liberals are more concerned about discrimination as a moral principle, then one might expect them to show at least *some* concern about this kind of discrimination—or at the very least, more concern than their conservative counterparts, who are supposedly anti-egalitarian.

⁶ We downloaded data provided by the researchers for this study (available on the Pew Research Center website), which indicated that 34% of Democrats (and 39% of liberals) stated that atheists experience “a lot” of discrimination, compared to 14% of Republicans (and 17% of conservatives). Conversely, 23% of Democrats (and 22% of liberals) stated that evangelical Christians experience “a lot” of discrimination, compared to 41% of Republicans (and 41% of conservatives).

One might argue that liberals are less concerned about discrimination against the latter set of groups because such discrimination is less harmful, less of a problem, or less ill-intentioned. Yet according to the Alliance Theory, this is exactly the response that liberals are predicted to have toward such discrimination—i.e. downplaying, rationalizing, or minimizing transgressions against their political enemies. Indeed, liberals might even obstruct scientific research designed to shed light on such discrimination. When researchers randomly sent one of two study proposals to human subjects committees—one examining conventional discrimination and the other examining reverse discrimination—the committees rejected the proposal on reverse discrimination over twice as frequently, and many committee members explicitly stated that they rejected the proposal for political reasons (Ceci, Peters, & Plotkin, 1985).

One final possibility is that liberals are indeed more opposed to discrimination as a moral principle, it is only that, due to the United States' long history of racism and sexism, they are more concerned about avoiding the perpetuation of historical discrimination. Perhaps a better test of the Egalitarianism Theory, then, would involve measures of discrimination against groups that have not suffered from, or have not benefited from, historical discrimination. One such test might involve partisan discrimination, or the tendency to discriminate against people who hold different ideologies. In this case, the Egalitarianism Theory predicts that liberals will be less likely to exhibit partisan discrimination than conservatives. However, as we have seen, liberals are just as likely to exhibit partisan discrimination as conservatives (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). Liberals are also just as likely to discriminate against groups associated with the political right (e.g. Tea Party activists, pro-life people) as

conservatives are to discriminate against groups associated with the political left (e.g. feminists, pro-choice people; Wetherell et al., 2013; see also Marcus et al., 1995). Moreover, when social psychologists were asked how inclined they would be to discriminate against a conservative job applicant at their university, fully 82% of liberals admitted that they would be at least a little bit inclined to discriminate against the applicant (Duarte, Crawford, Stern, Haidt, Jussim, & Tetlock, 2015, p. 11; Inbar & Lammers, 2012).

In sum, liberals do not appear to be impartial defenders of egalitarianism; rather, they support equality if, and only if, it benefits specific groups—namely women, atheists, African Americans, feminists, pro-choice people, or liberals. When it comes to other groups—namely men, Christians, white people, Tea Party activists, pro-life people, or conservatives—liberals support for egalitarianism is reversed. Moreover, when attitudes toward equality are measured in such a way as to remove any connection to politically relevant groups, differences between liberals and conservatives disappear. Taken together, the body of evidence is more consistent with the Alliance Theory than the Egalitarianism Theory (see table 4).

Dependent variable	Alliance Theory predictions	Egalitarianism Theory predictions	Empirical evidence
Preference for equality	• Will be present when equality benefits allies (+) • Will be reversed when equality benefits enemies (+) • Will be similar across ideologies when equality has no perceived effect on allies or enemies (+)	• Will be consistently higher among liberals as a general moral principle, regardless of which groups benefit, and regardless of the measure used (–)	• Egalitarian concern only present for allies (Jones et al., 2016, pp. 15-17; Moore, 2014; Rasmussen Reports, 2013; Bosson et al., 2012; Pew Research Center, 2009; Miller, 2017; Tetlock et al., 2000, study 3; Ceci et al., 1985) • Both liberals and conservatives discriminate against enemies (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Wetherell et al., 2013; Inbar & Lammers, 2012) • Widespread partisan agreement on equality in the abstract (Norton & Ariely, 2011; Norton et al., 2014; Sears et al., 2000)

Table 4. Predictions entailed by the Alliance Theory vs. the Egalitarianism Theory. Plus sign (+) denotes positive evidence; minus sign (–) denotes negative evidence.

Section Summary

Many prominent theorists claim that ideologies derive from partisan asymmetries in moral principles, including compassion, equality, tolerance, and hierarchy. Yet a variety of empirical findings challenge this idea, showing instead that people only endorse these principles if they appear to benefit their political allies. The strategic nature of these moral endorsements leads to a variety of double standards, which we have summarized in table 5. These double standards are difficult to reconcile with existing theoretical approaches (including any domain-general motive for cognitive consistency; e.g. Abelson et al., 1968), but they are easily explained by the Alliance Theory.

Moral Principle	Double Standard	Source
We must respect authority figures	...except climate scientists, the Internal Revenue Service, civil rights activists, the national news media, or Barack Obama	pp. 65-67
Poor people in America have no one to blame but themselves	...unless they are working class white people, in which case they should blame immigration, international trade, and reverse discrimination	pp. 54-55
We must tolerate and respect members of all groups	...unless they are pro-life, devout Christians, businesspeople, white people, men, members of the military, or Republicans	pp. 61-63
Torture and civilian casualties are an acceptable part of war	...unless they perpetrated by Iraqis, in which case they are unacceptable	p. 52
We must stand up for free speech	...unless the speakers challenge my political views	p. 67
We must help the needy	...unless they are elderly or actually lazy, or unless Democrats oppose it	pp. 57-59
People should not be so easily offended	...unless they are white, Christian, men, or police officers	pp. 53-54
We must support equality	...but only when African Americans are disadvantaged	p. 70

We must fight discrimination in all its forms	...except discrimination against Christians, men, white people, Tea Party activists, pro-life people, or conservatives	pp. 70-73
Foreigners cannot be trusted	...except Vladimir Putin	pp. 63-64

Table 5. Apparent moral principles of liberal or conservative ideology (first column) alongside exceptions to those moral principles (second column). Third column refers readers to sections that provide empirical support for these double standards.

Discussion

The Alliance Theory is relatively modest in its assumptions. It does not posit any special, innate, or fundamental differences between liberals and conservatives. Indeed, contrary to other approaches, the theory does not assume (nor preclude) any psychological differences between liberals and conservatives at all. The theory only makes three assumptions: 1) Humans possess cognitive adaptations for alliance formation, 2) These adaptations include a suite of biases that are applied to one's allies, and 3) These biases generate the conflicting contents of political ideologies.

All three of these assumptions rest on solid theoretical and empirical foundations. If premise 1) were false, it would imply that adaptations for alliance formation are ubiquitous in social primates but absent in humans. Given that there is no reason to expect natural selection to have eliminated these adaptations in the human lineage, and strong reasons to expect natural selection to have enhanced them (Byrne & Whiten, 1988, 1997), premise 1) is difficult to dispute. If premise 2) were false, it would contradict the large body of evidence reviewed in sections two and three indicating that people apply victim, perpetrator, and attributional biases to their allies. Given that political parties draw support from diverse coalitions, it is difficult to see how this array of biases, when applied to the members of such coalitions, would *not* lead to conflicting ideological narratives (premise 3). Once we take on board these relatively modest assumptions, the

theory can account for a wealth of empirical findings predicted by the most prominent theories in political psychology, including many findings these theories struggle to account for.

One important implication of the Alliance Theory is that many *ad hoc* psychological constructs—e.g. core values, social orientations, moral foundations—are unlikely to be adequate explanations of political ideology. Indeed, even if partisans reliably differed on one or another construct, it would immediately beg the question of a) where that difference *itself* came from, and b) what the precise causal pathways are between this construct and the diverse—and often contradictory—contents of ideologies (see table 5). The Alliance Theory does not suffer from these explanatory deficiencies. Rather, it explains ideology by appeal to group allegiances, which have straightforward, causal connections to specific beliefs and policy preferences—i.e. those that advance the interests of the groups in question (Nelson & Kinder, 1996). If we ask where these group allegiances came from, we have a powerful answer: an evolved, species-typical alliance psychology, many features of which we share with other social primates.

Of course, determining the precise architecture of this alliance psychology will be a difficult task (though see Pietraszewski, 2016 for a preliminary attempt). Nevertheless, what we already know—e.g. the importance of similarity and transitivity—may be enough to make textured predictions about how individuals come to ally themselves with different groups. Variation in mating strategies could predispose people to join or abandon religious groups that support sexually conservative lifestyles (Weeden, 2015). Variation in openness, itself related to mating strategies (Wright & Reise, 1997), could occasionally sway people to favor groups that are perceived as “conventional” (e.g.

business people, Christians) over groups perceived as “unconventional” (e.g. gay people, atheists; Brandt, Chambers, Crawford, Wetherell, & Reyna, 2015).

Cultural variation might also play a role in influencing alliance formation. Highly educated, urban white Americans have culturally diverged from poorly educated, rural white Americans (Murray, 2013), potentially contributing to the growing political divide between these groups (Kron, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2016b; see also Cramer, 2016). Low social class is also related to heightened threat sensitivity (Kraus, Horberg, Goetz, and Keltner, 2011), which could cause lower class white people to feel greater allegiance to the police (if the police are perceived to mitigate threats), and cause lower class African Americans to feel greater enmity toward the police (if the police are perceived to pose threats). As different social and cultural groups congeal to form rival coalitions, partisanship may become more about identity than policy. This line of reasoning might explain why various social identities—e.g. region, social class, ethnicity, religiosity—are related to party identification independent of policy preferences (Wlezien & Miller, 1997; Achen & Bartels, 2016, chapters 8-10).

Given the importance of social identities to alliance formation patterns, we can sketch some hypotheses about how political coalitions in the United States might have arisen. We begin with four, plausible intergroup rivalries that could have emerged from the bottom-up through patterns of social assortment and/or perceptions of conflict:

- 1) upper class white people (e.g. highly educated, urban, “sophisticated”) vs. lower class white people (e.g. poorly educated, rural, southern, “white trash”; Murray, 2013; Isenberg, 2016; Cramer, 2016; Kuntsman, Plant, & Deska, 2016)

- 2) African Americans vs. lower-class white people (Maykovich, 1975; Oliver & Mendelberg, 2000; Weeden & Kurzban, 2014, chapter 5)
- 3) Christians vs. secular people (Weeden & Kurzban, 2014, chapter 4; Bolce & De Maio, 1999)
- 4) wealthy businesspeople (e.g. corporate CEOs, managers) vs. poor people (Hout, Brooks, & Manza, 1995; McCall & Manza, 2011; Weeden & Kurzban, 2014, chapters 6-7).

Research indicates substantial overlap between some of these groups, for instance between poor people and African Americans (Pew Research Center, 2011), between secular people and upper class white people (Pew Research Center, 2012, pp. 33-39), and likewise between Christians and lower class white people (Schieman, 2010). This overlap could have initiated alliances between these three pairs of groups. Perceptions of transitivity might also play a role. For instance, upper class, secular white people might recognize—perhaps with the help of political elites—that they have a common enemy with African Americans, namely lower class, Christian white people. Moreover, wealthy businesspeople might recognize—perhaps with the help of political elites—that they have a common enemy with lower-class white people, namely poor African Americans.⁷ The result would be a coalition of wealthy businesspeople, lower class white

⁷ We do not mean to suggest that the current pattern of party coalitions necessarily had to turn out that way; that is, alliance formation patterns may be difficult to predict in advance. Indeed, there are other overlaps that could have led to a different pattern of alliances (e.g. between African Americans and Christians, or between poor people and lower class white people). These overlaps might create some feeling of allegiance between African Americans and Christians (or between poor people and lower class white people). These feelings of allegiance might also cause some people to diverge from ideological consistency (e.g. causing African Americans to be socially conservative but economically liberal, or causing lower class white people to be racially conservative but economically liberal). However, when it comes to vote choice and party identification, some feelings of allegiance and enmity are likely to outweigh others—which may cause some African Americans, for example, to vote Democratic despite their allegiance to Christians (or cause some lower class white people to vote Republican despite their allegiance to poor people).

people, and Christians (i.e. the Republican Party; Weeden & Kurzban, 2014, chapter 8), and a coalition of upper class white people, secular people, and African Americans (i.e. the Democratic Party; Weeden & Kurzban, 2014, chapter 9).⁸ One could test these hypotheses by experimentally manipulating perceptions of transitivity or similarity to these groups and examining their effects on party identification. Alternatively, one could investigate whether past partisan realignments can be explained in terms of political parties' shifting allegiances to different demographic groups (see Achen & Bartels, 2016, chapter 9 for a recent example of this approach).

This line of reasoning suggests that political alliances cannot be reduced to any simple dichotomies, like “high status vs. low status.” There may be many high-status groups associated with liberals—e.g. climate scientists, civil rights attorneys, members of the “liberal media,” college professors, and people who drive Hybrids. Likewise, there may be many low-status groups associated with conservatives—e.g. working class white people, truck drivers, Christian fundamentalists, stay-at-home moms, and people who live in trailers. Whereas conflicts often arise along lines of social status, alliances can also transcend social status, with high and low-status groups uniting against a common enemy (see pp. 23-24; Chapais, 1995). In order to fully understand political alliances, researchers will need to look beyond simple dichotomies to investigate the cultural, regional, ethnic, lifestyle, and religious differences that shape alliance formation patterns.

⁸ We do not mean to imply that these are the only relevant groups to party politics; there are clearly other groups that could be included in this analysis. For instance, once the Democratic Party became associated with defending the interests of African Americans, this could have caused Latinos and women to move to the Democratic Party as a result of perceived similarity with African Americans—i.e. as members of historically marginalized groups.

According to the Alliance Theory, politics can be defined as the negotiation of conflicts between competing social and demographic groups. Individuals, groups, and their allies generate biased narratives—i.e. ideologies—to prevail in these conflicts. Ideologies, therefore, derive more from one’s political allegiances than from one’s core values, ethical philosophies, or moral principles. As we have seen, one’s political allegiances determine core values more than the other way around (Goren, 2005), ethical philosophies are often confabulated *post hoc* to justify support for one’s allies (Uhlmann et al., 2009; Cohen, 2003), and partisans’ moral principles are rarely principled (see table 5). However, if all of this correct, then why do the most politically engaged partisans so often claim to be motivated by morality (e.g. Skitka & Bauman, 2008)?

Such claims, we propose, serve the same function as the propagandistic biases discussed in previous sections. If third parties choose sides in conflicts based on morality (DeScioli & Kurzban, 2013), then appealing to widely held moral principles will help draw supporters to one’s side. Consistent with this idea, partisans on both sides of the political spectrum claim to be motivated by moral concerns (i.e. altruism, impartiality, civic-mindedness, and love), while claiming that their political opponents are motivated by immoral concerns (i.e. selfishness, bias, tribalism, and hate; Reeder, Pryor, Wohl, & Griswell, 2005; Steffens, Haslam, Jetten, & Mols, 2016; Waytz, Young, & Ginges, 2014; Kennedy & Pronin, 2008; Cohen, 2003). Since these conflicting motivational accounts cannot both be correct, it is plausible that at least one of them derives from propagandistic biases.

From the perspective of the Alliance Theory, politics and morality are separate domains, with the former often masquerading as the latter for strategic purposes. We do

not deny that humans are fundamentally moral beings (Hamlin, 2013); rather, we claim that the widespread conflation of politics with morality hinders our understanding of both. Politics is about conflict and allegiance, whereas morality is about cooperation and impartiality (Baumard et al., 2013; Descioli & Kurzban, 2013). Attending to these distinctions yields novel predictions, while ignoring them sews needless confusion. For instance, we predict that moderate partisans will be more willing to side against their party for moral reasons than extreme partisans. Moderate partisans might even be less likely to exhibit the moral double standards listed in table 5—that is, they may show greater moral consistency. But if politics and morality are identical, then these predictions are incoherent: why would the *least* morally motivated individuals (i.e. political moderates) be the *most* willing to behave morally?

The distinction between politics and morality also suggests that moral disagreements between partisans may be overstated. Rather than disagreeing about the abstract importance of fairness, compassion, tolerance, and authority, partisans may merely disagree about who we should tolerate, who we should respect, who we should feel sorry for, and who is being treated unfairly. Rather than disagreeing about the abstract importance of punishment for perpetrators, compensation for victims, admiration for the talented, and aid for the unfortunate, partisans may merely disagree about who is a perpetrator, who is a victim, who is talented, and who is unfortunate. Indeed, much of political discourse consists in trying to make one’s political opponents seem immoral, while making one’s own side seem moral, according to shared standards of morality.

Many of us are familiar with the “politics” of everyday life—e.g. office politics, academic politics, etc. Yet the politics of everyday life may be no different from the

politics of a democratic citizenry, except that the stakes are higher. Political alliances may be analogous to friendships; political parties may be analogous to cliques; and political ideologies may be analogous to the self-serving narratives that emerge from interpersonal disputes. If you do not trust your friend's side of the story, she may not consider you a true friend; likewise, if you do not trust your allies' side of the story, they may not consider you a true ally. When seen in this light, motivated reasoning is not so much of a cognitive shortcoming as it is an honest signal of loyalty. If the Alliance Theory is correct, then political ideology may be as fundamental to the human condition as friends, rivals, and social life itself.

Chapter 4: Equality for All, or for My Allies? Testing the Alliance Theory

Chapter Abstract

The Alliance Theory proposes that policy disputes are a type of intergroup conflict, and that policy preferences will be determined by one's allegiance to the supporters and beneficiaries of the policy in question. The Alliance Theory therefore predicts that policy preferences will be *group-centric* (Nelson & Kinder, 1996)—that is, there will be a direct and robust relationship between group attitudes and policy preferences that is independent of other variables. In contrast, several prominent theories in political psychology (i.e. Moral Foundations Theory, Social Dominance Theory, System Justification Theory) predict that policy preferences will be *egalitarianism-centric*—that is, there will be a direct and robust relationship between *egalitarianism* and policy preferences that is independent of other variables. We therefore pit these theories against one another by examining the effects of each variable when controlling for the other. Using a large, nationally representative dataset from the 2016 American National Election Study (N = 4,271), and examining policy preferences across a range of issues relevant to equality—e.g. gay marriage, taxation, healthcare, and affirmative action—we find that policy preferences are primarily group-centric, even for issues that are explicitly about equality (i.e. opposition to income inequality). Across all issues, controlling for group attitudes powerfully reduces or eliminates the effect of egalitarianism on policy preferences, whereas controlling for egalitarianism leaves the effect of group attitudes on policy preferences virtually unchanged. Moreover, the effects of group attitudes are larger in magnitude (over twice as large, on average) than the effects of egalitarianism. We discuss the implications of these findings for theories of political ideology.

Rhetoric surrounding the idea of “equality” is ubiquitous in political discourse. Gay marriage has been referred to as “marriage equality,” debates on redistributive taxation are framed in terms of promoting equality or maintaining inequality, and proponents of universal access to healthcare have appealed to ethical principles of equality (Daniels, 2008). Accordingly, several prominent theories in political psychology posit that support for (or opposition to) equality plays a crucial role in shaping political ideologies, with support for equality underlying a variety of liberal policy preferences, and with opposition to equality underlying a variety of conservative policy preferences (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003; Graham et al., 2009; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994).

One such theory, for instance, is Social Dominance Theory (SDT). According to SDT theorists, support for equality—and opposition to inequality—is a crucial personality variable that underlies attitudes toward anti-discrimination laws, gay rights, social welfare, and economic conservatism in general (Pratto et al., 1994). Moreover, System Justification Theory (SJT) posits that opposition to equality is part of the “core ideology of conservatism,” which seems to imply a direct and robust relationship between opposition to equality and conservative policy preferences. Proponents of Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), moreover, posit that conservatives rely less on the “equality/fairness” foundation, a cognitive module that evolved for negotiating reciprocity and divisions of resources (Graham et al., 2009). According to MFT theorists, reliance on different moral foundations, including the equality/fairness foundation, “underlie, motivate, and unite ideological positions across a variety of issues” (Koleva, Graham, Iyer, Ditto, & Haidt, 2012, p. 1). Thus, all three of these theories predict a direct

relationship between opposition to equality and conservative policy preferences (particularly the policies relevant to equality), even when controlling for other relevant variables.

Another postulate of all three theories is that egalitarianism, in addition to the causal role it plays in shaping policy preferences, shapes attitudes toward various social groups. SDT, for instance, posits that opposition to equality produces negative attitudes toward hierarchy-attenuating groups and positive attitudes toward hierarchy-enhancing groups (Pratto et al., 1994). MFT claims that lower concerns about equality lead individuals to “frown on people” who violate principles of “equality and justice” (Koleva et al., 2012, p. 2). SJT claims that system justification motives lead to greater ingroup favoritism for high-status groups and greater outgroup favoritism for low-status groups (Jost & Hunyadi, 2005). In addition, SDT theorists posit that group attitudes may partially mediate the relationship between egalitarianism and policy preferences (Sidanius, Levin, Rabinowitz, Federico, & Pratto, 1999), whereas it is unclear whether the other two theories predict such a mediation.

In sum, SJT, SDO, and MFT predict that a core disposition, egalitarianism, produces two outcomes: 1) more liberal policy preferences (depending on whether the policies are relevant to issues of equality), and 2) more positive or negative attitudes toward various groups (see figure 1). (Note that at least one of these approaches allows for group attitudes to partially mediate the effect of egalitarianism on policy preferences, depicted in figure 1 as a grey arrow). Moreover, if both group attitudes and policy preferences stem from egalitarianism, then group attitudes and policy preferences will be primarily related to one another through their relationship with egalitarianism (see figure

1). This implies that controlling for egalitarianism will substantially reduce the relationship between group attitudes and policy preferences (see figure 1). Another prediction entailed by the three theories is that the effects of egalitarianism on policy preferences will tend to be larger than the effects of group attitudes on policy preferences. That is, if egalitarianism is the central causal variable underlying policy preferences, and if group attitudes mainly stem from variation in egalitarianism, then the total effect of egalitarianism on policy preferences should be larger than (or at least equal to) the total effect of group attitudes on policy preferences (see figure 1).

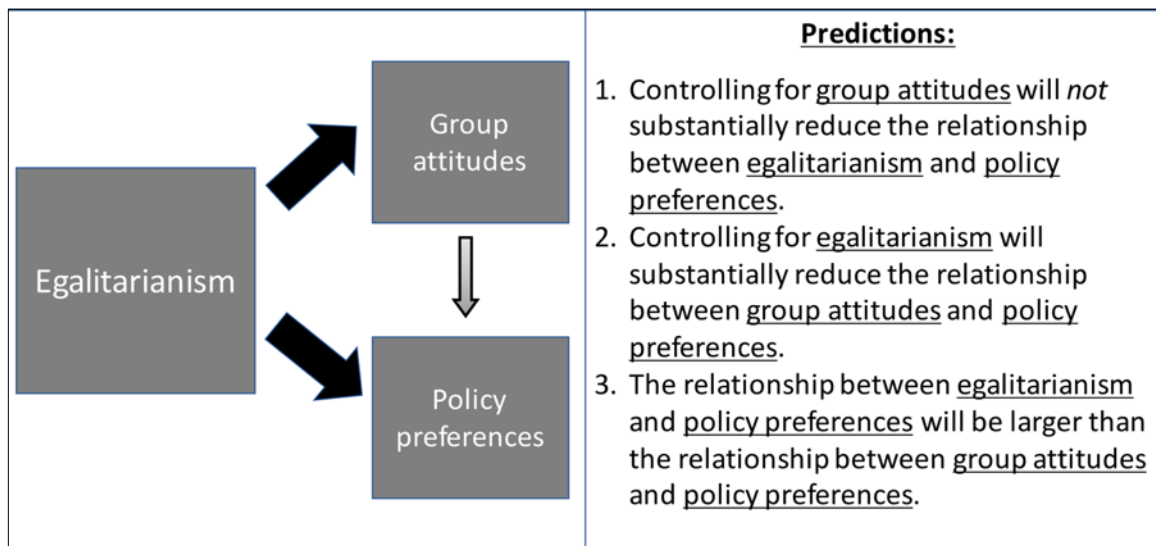


Figure 1. Graphical representation of the causal model implied by the three egalitarianism theories (SDO, SJT, and MFT; left cell), and empirical predictions entailed by the model (right cell).

The Alliance Theory. The Alliance Theory (see chapter 3) posits a diametrically opposite model of policy preferences than the three theories mentioned above. According to the Alliance Theory, policy preferences do not derive so much from egalitarian principles as from feelings of allegiance or enmity toward specific groups. Policy disputes are not merely philosophical disagreements; they are social conflicts wherein different groups prefer mutually incompatible outcomes. Whenever such conflicts occur,

individuals will be motivated to side with their allies, often regardless of the details of the conflict. This implies that individuals' support for various policies will strongly depend on their feelings of allegiance to the supporters and beneficiaries of the policy in question. Thus, the Alliance Theory predicts a direct and robust relationship between *group attitudes*—i.e. feelings of allegiance or enmity toward specific groups—and policy preferences, even when controlling for other relevant variables (see also Nelson & Kinder, 1996). (Note our use of “group attitudes” may extend to feelings of allegiance toward specific politicians who are associated with the conflict as well).

Another prediction of the Alliance Theory is that group attitudes, in addition to the causal role they play in shaping policy preferences, cause people to employ a variety of argumentative tactics to mobilize support for their allies. For instance, people might exaggerate their allies' grievances (*victim biases*), downplay their allies' transgressions (*perpetrator biases*), attribute their allies' advantages to internal dispositions (*internal attributional biases*), and attribute their allies' disadvantages to misfortune (*external attributional biases*; see Chapter 3). Another tactic individuals might employ is appealing to a widely held moral principle—e.g. equality (or proportionality)—that would justify siding with one's allies in the conflict they are engaged in (see DeScioli, Massenkoff, Shaw, Petersen, & Kurzban, 2014 for evidence that people use these tactics to advance their self-interest in conflicts). That is, people might express their support for equality (or proportionality) in order to persuade third parties to take their allies' side in conflicts.

In sum, the Alliance Theory entails that group attitudes produce two outcomes: 1) endorsement of egalitarian (or anti-egalitarian) principles as a tactic to mobilize support for one's allies, and 2) support for (or opposition to) social policies as a function of

whether they benefit one's allies or enemies (see figure 2). Moreover, since egalitarianism and policy preferences both stem from group attitudes, then egalitarianism will mainly be related to policy preferences through its relationship with group attitudes (see figure 2). This implies that controlling for group attitudes will substantially reduce the relationship between egalitarianism and policy preferences (see figure 2). Another prediction entailed by the Alliance Theory is that the effect of group attitudes on policy preferences will be larger than the effect of egalitarianism on policy preferences. That is, if group attitudes are the central causal variable underlying policy preferences, and if egalitarianism stems from group attitudes, then the total effect of group attitudes on policy preferences must be larger than (or at least equal to) the total effect of egalitarianism on policy preferences (see figure 2).

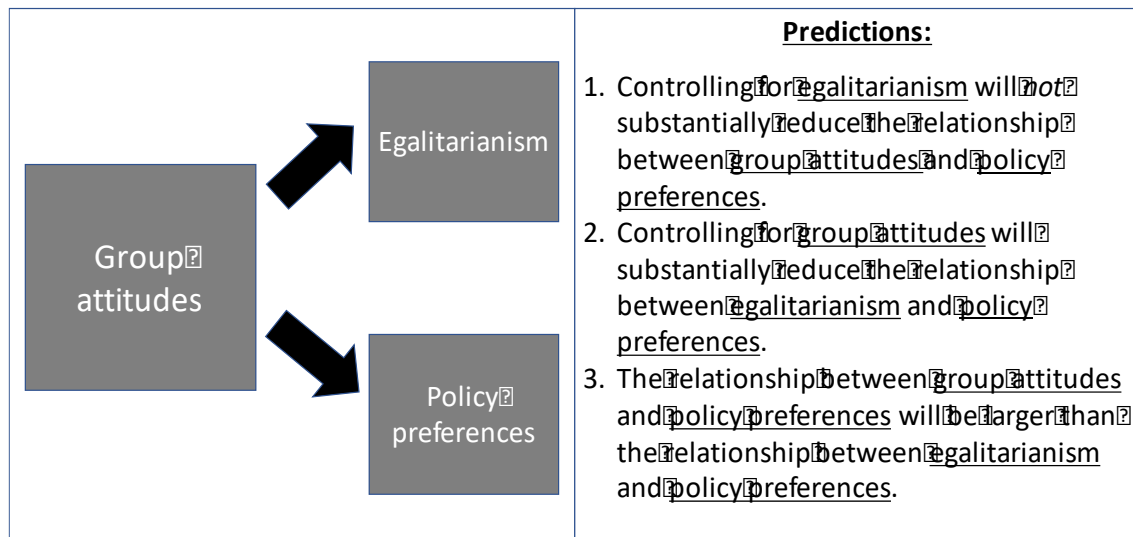


Figure 2. Graphical representation of the causal model implied by the Alliance Theory (left cell), and empirical predictions entailed by the model (right cell).

To test these hypotheses, we examined data from the 2016 American National Election Study (ANES), a nationally representative survey that ran two waves prior to, and following, the 2016 presidential election. Fortunately for our purposes, the 2016

ANES contained four items that are identical to the “opposition to equality” subscale of the Social Dominance Orientation scale (Pratto et al., 1994). Moreover, SJT theorists have used this same subscale in their research as a measure of “system justifying ideology” (Wakslak, Jost, Tyler, & Chen, 2007), making it a suitable variable for testing predictions entailed by both theories. Finally, the measure also shares many *prima facie* similarities to measures of the “equality/fairness” foundation: for instance, one item on the moral foundations questionnaire measures agreement with the statement “I think it’s morally wrong that rich children inherit a lot of money while poor children inherit nothing,” which is similar to an item from the ANES scale which states “It is not really that big a problem if some people have more of a chance in life than others” (see table 1).

Items from the opposition to equality scale (ANES)	Similar items from the “Equality/Fairness” foundation
“Our society should do whatever is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.”	“When the government makes laws, the number one principle should be ensuring that everyone is treated fairly.”
“This country would be better off if we worried less about how equal people are.” / “If people were treated more equally in this country we would have many fewer problems.”	“[When I decide whether something is right or wrong, I consider it extremely relevant (or not at all relevant)] whether or not some people were treated differently than others.”
“It is not really that big a problem if some people have more of a chance in life than others.”	“I think it’s morally wrong that rich children inherit a lot of money while poor children inherit nothing.”

Table 1. Items from the opposition to equality scale in the ANES (left column) compared to *prima facie* similar items from the “equality/fairness” foundation of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (Graham et al., 2009).

For most of the analyses, we used relatively crude measures of group attitudes, relying solely on group thermometer ratings, in which participants rate how “warm” or “cool” they feel toward a variety of groups on a 0-100 point scale. This measure has some face validity, but it lacks strong theoretical justification. Whereas individuals will tend to have more positive attitudes toward their allies and more negative attitudes toward their enemies—and this will tend to be reflected in thermometer ratings—our

alliance psychology is more sophisticated than this. According to the Alliance Theory, feelings of allegiance will be associated with a constellation of specific cognitive and motivational consequences, including an increased likelihood of a) taking the group's side in conflicts, b) supporting the group's allies, c) opposing the group's enemies, and d) applying victim, perpetrator, and attributional biases to the group. Since group thermometer ratings do not directly tap any of these components, they are not ideal measures of allegiance. For these reasons, it is likely that our reliance on thermometer ratings has lowered the likelihood of our hypotheses being confirmed.

Fortunately, we were able to use more theoretically informed measures of allegiance for two of the groups: African Americans and Christians. The 2016 wave of the ANES has included four items from the "symbolic racism scale" (Henry & Sears, 2002). Symbolic racism has been used as a measure of enmity toward African Americans (where such enmity might not be explicitly endorsed) in a variety of studies, and it has been shown to have strong validity and internal reliability (Henry & Sears, 2002). From the perspective of the Alliance Theory, symbolic racism is an ideal measure of enmity (vs. allegiance) to African Americans for several reasons. First, The Alliance Theory predicts that one's tendency to make internal or external attributions for a group's disadvantages will depend on one's allegiance or enmity to the group in question. Several items on the symbolic racism scale appear to directly measure these kinds of attributional biases. For instance, one item on the scale reads: "It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites," a statement that clearly implies an internal attribution for African Americans' low social status. Moreover, research indicates that lower scores on the symbolic racism

scale predict pro-black attitudes (i.e. support for Barack Obama relative to ideologically similar white candidates) suggesting that variation in symbolic racism scores span from enmity toward African Americans (at the high end) to allegiance to African Americans (at the low end; Tessler & Sears, 2010).

For Christians, the ANES has included several other items measuring attitudes toward Christians in addition to thermometer ratings. First, it includes items on stereotypes toward Christians, including whether Christians are “patriotic” or “violent.” Ratings on the former item may reflect general positive affect toward Christians, whereas ratings on the latter item may reflect a perpetrator bias. That is, if some Christians actually are violent (e.g. toward abortion doctors), then Christians’ allies will be motivated to downplay or minimize such violence. Second, the ANES contains one item measuring the extent to which Christians experience discrimination. Higher scores on this item plausibly reflect a victim bias—that is, Christians’ allies may be motivated to exaggerate the severity and prevalence of transgressions committed against them, including discrimination. Consistent with our expectations, all four of these items were significantly interrelated (median inter-item correlation was $r = .30$, $p < .0001$), and principle components analysis revealed that a common factor explained 48% of the variation in these items. We therefore extracted this common factor to use as my measure of attitudes toward Christians.

The ANES contains measures on a variety of different policy preferences. We decided to focus on policy issues that 1) were plausibly related to concerns about equality, and 2) were controversial enough to elicit a broad spectrum of opinion. For instance, whereas some policies are partly or indirectly related to concerns about equality,

including abortion (women's rights) or immigration (immigrant's rights), they are also plausibly related to other concerns beyond equality, including sexual promiscuity (see Chapter 2), or concerns about intergroup threats (González, Verkuyten, Weesie, & Poppe, 2008). Moreover, there was one item that measured participants' support for women being paid the same for doing the same work as men; however, there was broad consensus on this item, with only 4% of the sample opposing. This finding is consistent with prior research indicating substantial agreement on more basic principles of equal opportunity and equal treatment, with disagreements mainly arising from whether or not we've "gone too far" in "pushing" these principles for certain groups (Sears, Henry, & Kosterman, 2000).

The policies we investigated are as follows: affirmative action, government aid to African Americans, gay marriage, gay adoption, support for the Affordable Care Act, support for government funding for healthcare, greater taxes for millionaires, and opposition to income inequality. We have provided percentages of support for and opposition to these policies in table 2. All of these policies are plausibly related to concerns about equality, providing a good test for the three egalitarianism theories, and all of the policies are at least somewhat controversial. The least controversial issues are affirmative action (with the majority opposing) and higher taxes for millionaires (with the majority supporting), and the most controversial issues are income inequality and support for the Affordable Care Act (with close to even splits). These policy divides span a wide range of public opinion, and they represent good opportunities to pit the Alliance Theory against the three egalitarianism theories.

Policy issue	% Favor	% Neutral	% Oppose
Gay marriage	58.4	23.4 (favor civil unions)	18.2
Gay adoption	73.2	NA	26.8
Affordable Care Act	36.9	20.7	42.4
Govt. Healthcare spending	47.1	27.5	25.4
Tax for millionaires	67.2	17.7	15.1
Reduce income inequality	42.2	26.4	31.4
Affirmative action	24.4	NA	75.6
Govt. aid to African Americans	29.1	23.3	47.6

Table 2. Description of various policy issues (first column), with percentage of sample expressing support for (second column), neutrality toward (third column), or opposition to (last column) the policy in question.

For gay marriage and gay adoption, we expected policy preferences to be primarily related to attitudes toward Christians and attitudes toward gay men and lesbians, as these policy issues are essentially conflicts between Christians (and the kinds of mating strategies they want to defend; see Chapter 1) and gay men and lesbians. For affirmative action and government aid to African Americans, we expected preferences to be primarily related to symbolic racism (i.e. allegiance or enmity toward African Americans), because African Americans are likely to be viewed as the beneficiaries of these policies. For the Affordable Care Act and government healthcare, we expected preferences to be primarily related to attitudes toward Obama (because he is highly associated with the Affordable Care Act; Tessler, 2012), and symbolic racism (because Obama may be associated with African Americans more broadly). For income inequality and taxes on millionaires, we expected preferences to be to be primarily related to

attitudes toward rich people and poor people (because they may be viewed as the primary groups in conflict). For all policy attitudes, we also expected attitudes toward Republicans vs. Democrats (and attitudes toward liberals vs. conservatives) to play a role, because these groups are likely to be viewed as either supporters or opponents of the policy in question, and research indicates that cues of support or opposition from these groups have a strong influence on policy preferences independent of policy content (Cohen, 2003).

Method

Participants

A total of 4,271 participants were recruited via face-to-face interviews and online questionnaires as part of the 2016 ANES time series study. All data were taken from the second, post-election wave of the survey unless otherwise noted.

Materials and Procedure

Egalitarianism. Egalitarianism was measured by assessing agreement or disagreement with four statements: “Our society should do whatever is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed,” “This country would be better off if we worried less about how equal people are,” “It is not really that big a problem if some people have more of a chance in life than others,” and “If people were treated more equally in this country we would have many fewer problems.” Agreement was measured on a 5-point scale (1 = *Agree strongly*, 2 = *Agree somewhat*, 3 = *Neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *Disagree somewhat*, 5 = *Disagree strongly*).

Group thermometer ratings. All group thermometer ratings, with the exception of thermometer ratings toward Barack Obama, were collected in the second, post-election

wave of the survey. Thermometer ratings were on a scale from 0 to 100. Prior to giving thermometer ratings, participants were given the following instructions: “Please look at the graphic below. We would like to get your feelings toward some of our political leaders and other people who are in the news these days. We will show the name of a person and we’d like you to rate that person using something we call the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the person. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don’t feel favorable toward the person and that you don’t care too much for that person. You would rate the person at the 50 degree mark if you don’t feel particularly warm or cold toward the person.” We examined thermometer ratings for “Poor people,” “Rich people,” “Big business,” “Christians,” “Christian fundamentalists,” “Liberals,” “Conservatives,” “Gay men and lesbians,” “Barack Obama,” “The Democratic Party,” “The Republican Party,” and a variety of specific Republican and Democratic politicians (see “attitudes toward Republicans vs. Democrats”).

Attitudes toward Republicans vs. Democrats. For attitudes toward the two political parties, we first averaged thermometer ratings toward the 2016 Democratic presidential candidate, vice presidential candidate, house candidate (in participants’ district), senate candidate (in participants’ state), and thermometer ratings of “The Democratic Party” (this last item is from the pre-election wave of the survey; cronbach’s $\alpha = .87$). we then subtracted this from the average of the thermometer ratings toward the 2016 Republican presidential candidate, vice presidential candidate, house candidate (in participants’ district), senate candidate (in participants’ state), and thermometer

ratings toward “The Republican Party” (from the pre-election wave of the survey; cronbach’s alpha = .87).

Attitudes toward conservatives vs. liberals. For attitudes toward ideological ingroups vs. outgroups, we subtracted thermometer ratings toward liberals from thermometer ratings toward conservatives.

Symbolic racism. Symbolic racism was measured by assessing agreement or disagreement with four statements: 1) “It’s really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites,” 2) “Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors,” 3) “Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class,” and 4) “Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.” Agreement was measured on a 5-point scale (1 = *Agree strongly*, 2 = *Agree somewhat*, 3 = *Neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *Disagree somewhat*, 5 = *Disagree strongly*). Due to possible content overlap with attitudes toward affirmative action, the second item was removed from the scale for analyses involving support for affirmative action (following Henry & Sears, 2002).

Attitudes toward Christians. Attitudes were measured with five items. Participants were asked to rate Christians on 7-point scale from 1 (*Peaceful*) to 7 (*Violent*), and for a different item, on a 7-point scale from 1 (*Patriotic*) to 7 (*Unpatriotic*). For another item, participants were asked how much discrimination there is the United States against Christians on a 5-point scale from 1 (*A great deal*) to 5 (*None at all*). Finally, participants were asked to provide thermometer ratings for “Christians” and for

“Christian fundamentalists.” we extracted a common factor that explained 48% of the variation in these items for use in analyses.

Affordable Care Act. This item was measured during the first, pre-election wave of the survey. Preferences were measured with the following item: “Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose the health care reform law passed in 2010? This law requires all Americans to buy health insurance and requires health insurance companies to accept everyone.” Responses were recorded on a 7-point scale from 1 (*Favor a great deal*) to 7 (*Oppose a great deal*).

Government Healthcare. This item was measured during the first, pre-election wave of the survey. Participants were given the following instructions: “There is much concern about the rapid rise in medical and hospital costs. Some people feel there should be a government insurance plan which would cover all medical and hospital expenses for everyone. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others feel that all medical expenses should be paid by individuals through private insurance plans like Blue Cross or other company paid plans. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6.” Participants then provided their placement on a scale of 1 (*Govt insurance plan*) to 7 (*Private insurance plan*).

Gay marriage. This item was measured during the first, pre-election wave of the survey. Participants were asked “Which comes closest to your view?” and were presented with three options: 1 (*Gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to legally marry*), 2 (*Gay and lesbian couple should be allowed to form civil unions but not legally marry*), or 3 (*There should be no legal recognition of gay and lesbian couples’ relationships*).

Gay adoption. This item was measured during the first, pre-election wave of the survey. The item read as follows: “Do you think gay or lesbian couples should be legally permitted to adopt children?” Responses were either 1 (*yes*) or 2 (*no*), which were dummy coded as 0 (*yes*) and 1 (*no*).

Government aid to African Americans. This item was measured during the first, pre-election wave of the survey. Participants were asked to rate their preference for government aid to African Americans on a scale of 1 (*Govt should help blacks*) to 7 (*Blacks should help themselves*).

Affirmative Action. Preferences were measured with the following item: “Some people say that because of past discrimination, blacks should be given preference in hiring and promotion. Others say that such preference in hiring and promotion of blacks is wrong because it gives blacks advantages they haven't earned. What about your opinion—are you for or against preferential hiring and promotion of blacks?” Support was measured on a 4-point scale (1 = *Strongly favor*, 2 = *Slightly favor*, 3 = *Slightly oppose*, 4 = *Strongly oppose*).

Tax for Millionaires. Preferences were measured with the following item: “Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose increasing income taxes on people making over one million dollars per year?” (1 = *Favor*, 2 = *Neither favor nor oppose*, 3 = *Oppose*).

Income Inequality. Preferences were measured with the following item: “Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose the government trying to reduce the difference in incomes between the richest and poorest households?” Support was measured on 3-point scale (1 = *Favor*, 2 = *Neither favor nor oppose*, 3 = *Oppose*).

Results

All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 23. For each policy issue, we will first present a regression model containing group attitudes in step one and egalitarianism in step two. Then, we will report data with steps one and two reversed.

Affordable Care Act. In step one, we included four group attitude measures, including attitudes toward Democrats vs. Republicans, liberals vs. conservatives, Barack Obama, and symbolic racism. All measures were significant predictors of support for the affordable care act ($\beta = 0.23$, $SE = .001$, $p < .0001$; $\beta = 0.06$, $SE = .001$, $p < .005$; $\beta = 0.41$, $SE = .001$, $p < .0001$; $\beta = -0.07$, $SE = .03$, $p < .0001$; respectively). The combined model accounted for 50.3% of the variance. In step two, we added egalitarianism to the model. Controlling for egalitarianism did not substantially reduce the effect of attitudes toward Democrats vs. Republicans ($\beta = 0.22$, $SE = .001$, $p < .0001$), liberals vs. conservatives ($\beta = 0.05$, $SE = .001$, $p < .01$), Barack Obama ($\beta = 0.41$, $SE = .001$, $p < .0001$), or symbolic racism ($\beta = -0.05$, $SE = .03$, $p < .005$), and only reduced the combined effect size of group attitudes by 5%.

Reversing steps one and two, we examined the effect of egalitarianism by itself. Egalitarianism was a significant, positive predictor of support for the affordable care act ($\beta = 0.41$, $SE = .04$, $p < .0001$), accounting for 18.0% of the variance. In step two, we added group attitudes to the model. Controlling for group attitudes reduced the effect of egalitarianism by 85% ($\beta = 0.06$, $SE = .04$, $p < .0001$).

Support for government healthcare. In step one, we included the four group attitude measures, including attitudes toward Democrats vs. Republicans, liberals vs. conservatives, Barack Obama, and symbolic racism. All measures were significant

predictors of support for government healthcare ($\beta = 0.23$, $SE = .002$, $p < .0001$; $\beta = 0.22$, $SE = .001$, $p < .005$; $\beta = 0.13$, $SE = .002$, $p < .0001$; $\beta = -0.06$, $SE = .03$, $p < .001$; respectively). The combined model accounted for 33.1% of the variance in support for government healthcare. In step two, we added egalitarianism to the model. Controlling for egalitarianism did not substantially reduce the effect of attitudes toward Democrats vs. Republicans ($\beta = 0.20$, $SE = .001$, $p < .0001$), liberals vs. conservatives ($\beta = 0.19$, $SE = .001$, $p < .01$), Barack Obama ($\beta = 0.13$, $SE = .001$, $p < .0001$), or symbolic racism ($\beta = -0.02$, $SE = .03$, $p = 0.33$), and reduced the combined effect size of group attitudes by 16%.

Reversing steps one and two, we examined the effect of egalitarianism by itself. Egalitarianism was a significant, positive predictor of support for government healthcare ($\beta = 0.43$, $SE = .04$, $p < .0001$), accounting for 19.0% of the variance. In step two, we added group attitudes to the model. Controlling for group attitudes reduced the effect of egalitarianism by 65% ($\beta = 0.15$, $SE = .04$, $p < .0001$).

Government aid to African Americans. In step one, we included three group attitude measures, including attitudes toward Democrats vs. Republicans, liberals vs. conservatives, and symbolic racism. Symbolic racism was a significant predictor of support for government aid to African Americans ($\beta = -0.49$, $SE = .03$, $p < .0001$), as was attitudes toward Democrats vs. Republicans ($\beta = 0.23$, $SE = .001$, $p < .0001$); however, the effect of attitudes towards liberals vs. conservatives was not significant ($\beta = 0.01$, $SE = .001$, $p = 0.63$). The combined model accounted for 45.3% of the variance. In step two, we added egalitarianism to the model. Controlling for egalitarianism did not substantially change the effect of symbolic racism ($\beta = -0.46$, $SE = .03$, $p < .005$), attitudes toward

Democrats vs. Republicans ($\beta = 0.21$, $SE = .001$, $p < .0001$) or attitudes toward liberals vs. conservatives ($\beta = 0.01$, $SE = .001$, $p = 0.68$), and reduced the combined effect size of group attitudes by 7%.

Reversing steps one and two, we examined the effect of egalitarianism by itself. Egalitarianism was a significant, positive predictor of support for government aid to African Americans ($\beta = 0.47$, $SE = .03$, $p < .0001$), accounting for 21.7% of the variance. In step two, we added group attitudes to the model. Controlling for group attitudes reduced the effect of egalitarianism by 79% ($\beta = 0.10$, $SE = .04$, $p < .0001$).

Affirmative Action for African Americans. In step one, we included three group attitude measures, including the edited version of the symbolic racism scale (without the item referring to “special favors” for African Americans; Henry & Sears, 2002), attitudes toward Democrats vs. Republicans, and attitudes toward liberals vs. conservatives. Symbolic racism was a significant predictor of support for affirmative action ($\beta = -0.39$, $SE = .02$, $p < .0001$), as was attitudes toward Democrats vs. Republicans ($\beta = 0.13$, $SE = .001$, $p < .0001$), and attitudes towards liberals vs. conservatives ($\beta = 0.05$, $SE = .001$, $p < .05$). The combined model accounted for 25.7% of the variance. In step two, we added egalitarianism to the model. Controlling for egalitarianism did not substantially change the effect of symbolic racism ($\beta = -0.38$, $SE = .03$, $p < .005$), attitudes toward Democrats vs. Republicans ($\beta = 0.12$, $SE = .001$, $p < .0001$) or attitudes toward liberals vs. conservatives ($\beta = 0.04$, $SE = .001$, $p = 0.08$), and reduced the combined effect size of group attitudes by 5%.

Reversing steps one and two, we examined the effect of egalitarianism by itself. Egalitarianism was a significant, positive predictor of support for affirmative action ($\beta =$

0.31, SE = .03, $p < .0001$), accounting for 10% of the variance. In step two, we added group attitudes to the model. Controlling for group attitudes reduced the effect of egalitarianism by 90%, causing it to drop below statistical significance ($\beta = 0.03$, SE = .04, $p = 0.12$).

Gay marriage. In step one, we included the four group attitude measures. Three of the four measures were significant predictors of support for gay marriage, including attitudes toward Democrats vs. Republicans ($\beta = 0.06$, SE = .001, $p < .005$), Christians ($\beta = -0.24$, SE = .01, $p < .0001$), and gay men and lesbians ($\beta = 0.47$, SE = .001, $p < .0001$), while the effect of attitudes toward liberals vs. conservatives was not significant ($\beta = 0.02$, SE = .01, $p = .41$). The combined model accounted for 40.8% of the variance in support for gay marriage. In step two, we added egalitarianism to the model. Controlling for egalitarianism did not change the effect of attitudes toward Democrats vs. Republicans ($\beta = 0.07$, SE = .001, $p < .005$), attitudes toward Christians ($\beta = -0.24$, SE = .01, $p < .0001$), attitudes toward gay men and lesbians ($\beta = 0.47$, SE = .001, $p < .0001$), or attitudes toward liberals vs. conservatives ($\beta = 0.02$, SE = .01, $p = .41$), and reduced the combined effect size of group attitudes by 0%.

Reversing steps one and two, we examined the effect of egalitarianism by itself. Egalitarianism was a significant, positive predictor of support for gay marriage ($\beta = 0.26$, SE = .01, $p < .0001$), accounting for 7.0% of the variance. In step two, we added group attitudes to the model. Controlling for group attitudes reduced the effect of egalitarianism by 96%, causing the effect of egalitarianism to drop below statistical significance ($\beta = 0.01$, SE = .01, $p = .50$).

Gay adoption. In step one, we included the four group attitude measures. Two of the four measures were significant predictors of support for gay marriage, including attitudes toward Christians ($\beta = -0.20$, $SE = .01$, $p < .0001$), and attitudes toward gay men and lesbians ($\beta = 0.43$, $SE = .01$, $p < .0001$), while the effect of attitudes toward liberals vs. conservatives ($\beta = 0.03$, $SE = .01$, $p = .26$) and attitudes toward Democrats vs. Republicans ($\beta = 0.01$, $SE = .01$, $p = .81$) were not significant. The combined model accounted for 30.4% of the variance in support for gay adoption. In step two, we added egalitarianism to the model. Controlling for egalitarianism did not substantially reduce the effect of attitudes toward Christians ($\beta = 0.19$, $SE = .01$, $p < .0001$), attitudes toward gay men and lesbians ($\beta = 0.44$, $SE = .001$, $p < .0001$), attitudes toward Democrats vs. Republicans ($\beta = 0.02$, $SE = .001$, $p = 0.45$), or attitudes toward liberals vs. conservatives ($\beta = 0.04$, $SE = .001$, $p = .15$), and reduced the combined effect size of group attitudes by 0%.

Reversing steps one and two, we examined the effect of egalitarianism by itself. Egalitarianism was a significant, positive predictor of support for gay marriage ($\beta = 0.20$, $SE = .01$, $p < .0001$), accounting for 3.8% of the variance. In step two, we added group attitudes to the model. Controlling for group attitudes reduced the effect of egalitarianism by 80% ($\beta = 0.04$, $SE = .01$, $p < .05$).

Tax for millionaires. In step one, we included the six group attitude measures, including attitudes toward Democrats vs. Republicans, liberals vs. conservatives, big business, rich people, and poor people. All measures were significant predictors of support for increased taxes on millionaires ($\beta = 0.18$, $SE = .0001$, $p < .0001$; $\beta = 0.17$, $SE = .001$, $p < .0001$; $\beta = -0.10$, $SE = .001$, $p < .0001$; $\beta = -0.05$, $SE = .03$, $p < .01$; $\beta = 0.06$,

SE = .03, $p < .001$; respectively). The combined model accounted for 16.5% of the variance. In step two, we added egalitarianism to the model. Controlling for egalitarianism did not substantially reduce the effect of attitudes toward Democrats vs. Republicans ($\beta = 0.14$, SE = .001, $p < .0001$), liberals vs. conservatives ($\beta = 0.14$, SE = .0001, $p < .01$), big business ($\beta = -0.09$, SE = .001, $p < .0001$), rich people ($\beta = -0.05$, SE = .03, $p < .005$), or poor people ($\beta = 0.04$, SE = .03, $p < .005$), and reduced the combined effect size of group attitudes by 18%.

Reversing steps one and two, we examined the effect of egalitarianism by itself. Egalitarianism was a significant, positive predictor of support for gay marriage ($\beta = 0.30$, SE = .001, $p < .0001$), accounting for 9.2% of the variance. In step two, we added group attitudes to the model. Controlling for group attitudes reduced the effect of egalitarianism by 53% ($\beta = 0.14$, SE = .01, $p < .0001$).

Income inequality. In step one, we included the six group attitude measures, including attitudes toward Democrats vs. Republicans, liberals vs. conservatives, big business, rich people, and poor people. All measures were significant predictors of support for government reducing income inequality ($\beta = 0.21$, SE = .0001, $p < .0001$; $\beta = 0.24$, SE = .001, $p < .0001$; $\beta = -0.07$, SE = .001, $p < .0001$; $\beta = -0.06$, SE = .03, $p < .01$; $\beta = 0.09$, SE = .03, $p < .001$; respectively). The combined model accounted for 23.6% of the variance. In step two, we added egalitarianism to the model. Controlling for egalitarianism did not substantially reduce the effect of attitudes toward Democrats vs. Republicans ($\beta = 0.14$, SE = .001, $p < .0001$), liberals vs. conservatives ($\beta = 0.19$, SE = .0001, $p < .01$), big business ($\beta = -0.05$, SE = .001, $p < .0001$), rich people ($\beta = -0.06$, SE

= .03, $p < .005$), or poor people ($\beta = 0.05$, $SE = .03$, $p < .005$), and reduced the combined effect size of group attitudes by 27%.

Reversing steps one and two, we examined the effect of egalitarianism by itself. Egalitarianism was a significant, positive predictor of support for gay marriage ($\beta = 0.42$, $SE = .001$, $p < .0001$), accounting for 17.4% of the variance. In step two, we added group attitudes to the model. Controlling for group attitudes reduced the effect of egalitarianism by 50% ($\beta = 0.21$, $SE = .01$, $p < .0001$).

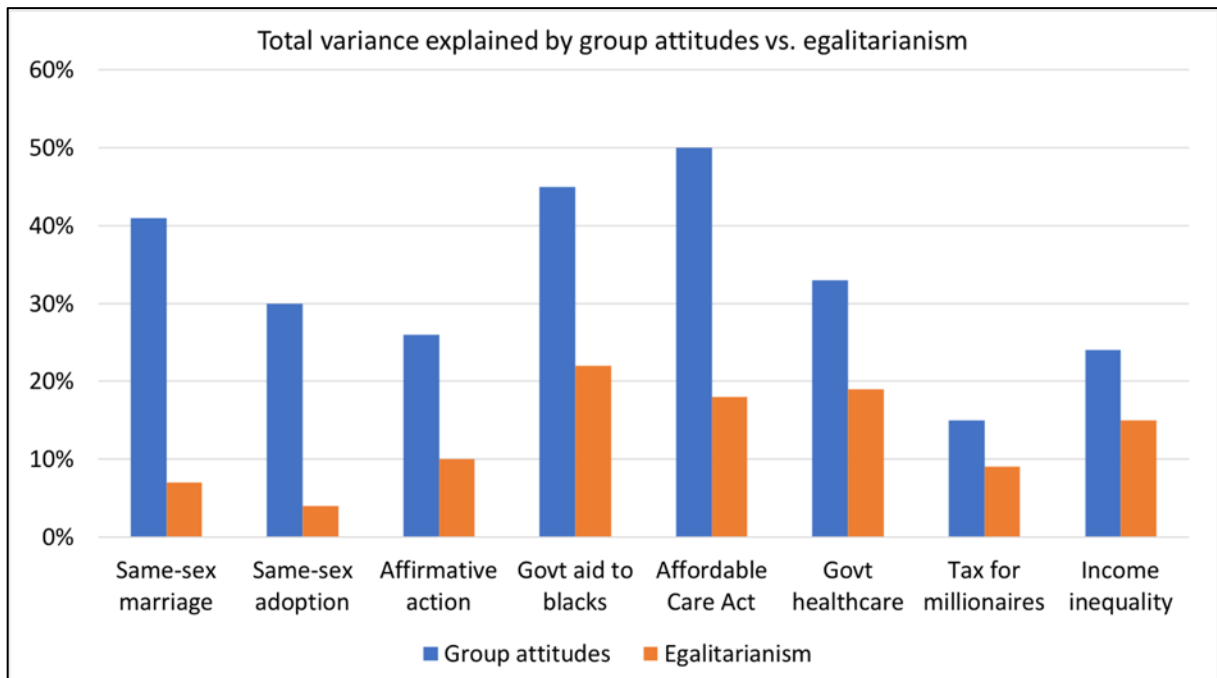


Figure 3. Total variance explained (y-axis) of various policy preferences (x-axis) by either group attitudes (blue bars) or egalitarianism (orange bars).

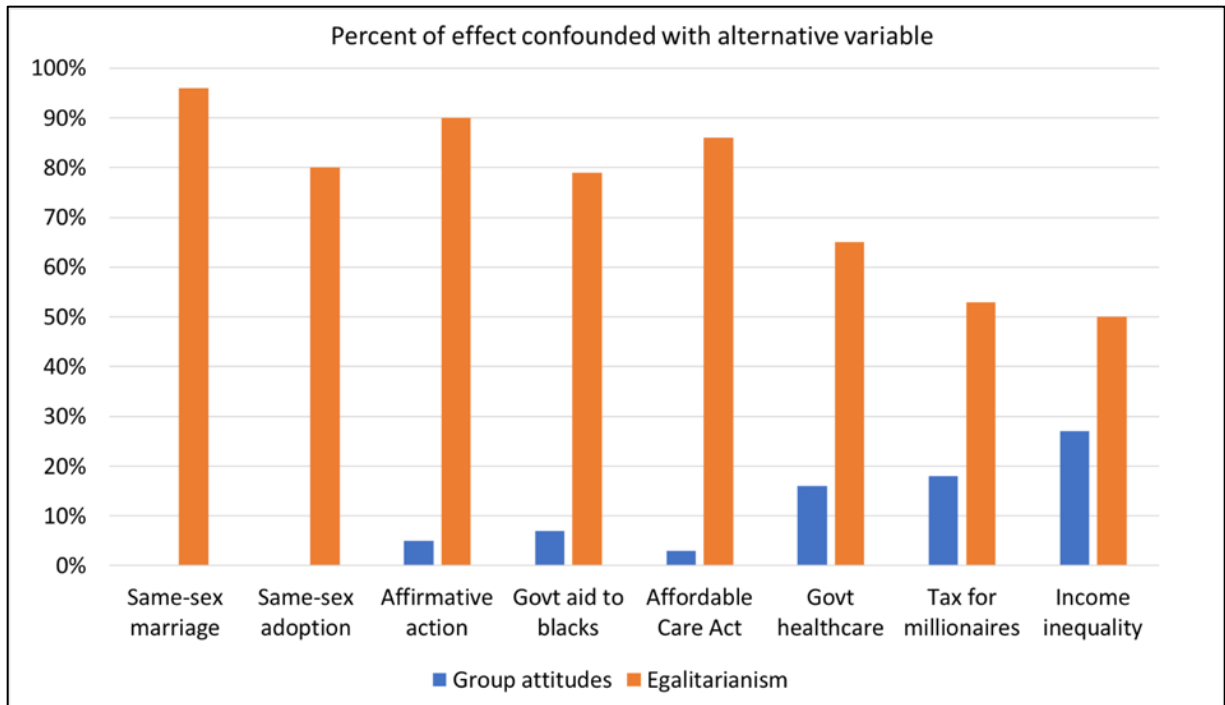


Figure 4. Across various policy preferences (x-axis), percent of effect of either egalitarianism (orange bars) or group attitudes (blue bars) that was confounded with the alternative variable (y-axis)—i.e. that was confounded with group attitudes (for egalitarianism) or that was confounded with egalitarianism (for group attitudes).

Discussion

The results of this study provide empirical support for the Alliance Theory, while posing a challenge to the three alternative theories. The effect of group attitudes on policy preferences was significantly larger (over twice as large, on average) than the effect of egalitarianism, without a single exception. Likewise, the effect of egalitarianism on policy preferences was dramatically reduced (by 75% on average), when controlling for group attitudes, suggesting very little direct relationship between egalitarianism and policy preferences. The reverse was not found: group attitudes were scarcely changed (reduced by 10% on average) when controlling for egalitarianism. Surprisingly, even when it came to support for policies that were explicitly about equality—i.e. opposition to income inequality—the effect of group attitudes was still larger, and more direct, than

the effect of egalitarianism. These results are difficult to reconcile with the idea egalitarianism plays a central role in shaping policy preferences, and they suggest that policy preferences are primarily about group allegiances.

Some of the strongest support for the Alliance Theory was found for the policies in which we used the most valid measures of group allegiances. Affirmative action and government aid to African Americans was almost entirely predicted by symbolic racism—the most theoretically valid measure of group allegiances used—with either zero or little direct effect of egalitarianism. Likewise, allegiance to Christians—which contained both measures of victim and perpetrator biases toward Christians—had robust effects on opposition to gay marriage and gay adoption, with egalitarianism having no significant direct effect on either policy preference. Conversely, the policies which relied mostly or exclusively on thermometer ratings showed relatively less (though still substantial) support for the Alliance Theory. These results suggest that developing more theoretically valid measures of group allegiances (i.e. beyond thermometer ratings) is a promising direction for future research.

Nevertheless, it may be possible for egalitarianism theorists to revise some of their assumptions in order to accommodate the results. For instance, the results would be consistent with a hybrid model that combines some features of the Alliance Theory with some features of the egalitarianism theories. For instance, egalitarianism theorists might concede that policy preferences are group-centric—i.e. that policy preferences are mostly determined by attitudes toward the supporters and beneficiaries of the policy in question. However, they might still claim that egalitarianism does, nevertheless, play some role in shaping attitudes toward the relevant groups, along with other possible factors (e.g.

similarity, transitivity, instrumentality; see Chapter 3). This model would be a hybrid model in the sense that alliances are still the primary driving force behind policy preferences, but that these alliances are determined, in part, by individual differences in egalitarianism.

Whereas such an account would be consistent with the predicted results, it would be unsatisfactory for a variety of reasons. First, the hybrid model assumes that egalitarianism plays a causal role in shaping group attitudes, including attitudes toward the Democratic Party. Yet longitudinal research indicates that temporal changes in egalitarianism are *not* associated with changes in party identification; however, changes in party identification *are* associated with changes in egalitarianism, supporting the idea that individuals support equality as a tactic to defend their allies (Goren, 2005). Second, the hybrid model assumes that egalitarianism is a stable trait that is held consistently across different contexts. Yet a variety of studies indicate that partisans only support equality when it appears to benefit their political allies, and in fact *oppose* equality when it benefits their political enemies (see Chapter 3). Third, the hybrid model assumes that egalitarianism (if it is a stable trait) varies across the political spectrum, with liberals supporting equality more than conservatives. Yet several studies indicate that partisan differences in support for equality disappear when measures are disconnected from group attitudes (see Chapter 3; Sears et al., 2000; Norton & Ariely, 2001). In other words, the hybrid model assumes that 1) egalitarianism is a stable, consistently held trait, 2) that liberals and conservatives genuinely differ on this trait (independent of group allegiances), and 3) that the trait plays a causal role in shaping group attitudes (as

opposed to the other way around). All three of these assumptions rest on shaky empirical foundations.

In contrast, the premise that people are prone to developing feelings of allegiance and enmity toward particular groups—and employing diverse tactics to defend those groups in conflicts—rests on strong empirical foundations (see Chapter 3). There are also theoretically rigorous accounts of where variation in group allegiances come from and how our alliance psychology evolved (see chapter 3), while there are no accounts, to our knowledge, of where variation in egalitarianism comes from, or how a preference for equality *in the abstract*—as opposed to equality for one’s disadvantaged allies—could have evolved. The Alliance Theory thus provides the more parsimonious and empirically grounded explanation for the results, offering a deeper explanation of variation in policy preferences than alternative accounts.

There are other ways, however, for egalitarianism theorists to reconcile our findings with their approaches. SJT theorists, for instance, might admit that egalitarianism has little direct relationship with policy preferences, but that other “system justifying ideologies” (e.g. resistance to change) play a stronger role. MFT theorists, moreover, might claim that other moral foundations beyond “equality/fairness” are more relevant to the policy issues in question. These defenses, however, are vulnerable to the same criticisms mentioned above. That is, if one is claiming that a core value or principle shapes policy preferences, then one must demonstrate that 1) individuals actually hold this principle consistently, 2) liberals and conservatives genuinely differ in the degree to which they hold this principle (independent of group allegiances), and 3) this principle plays a causal role in shaping group attitudes (as opposed to the other way around). In

addition, one would ideally want an account of where variation in the principle comes from, and why people who are otherwise culturally similar do not share it. Whether or not MFT, SJT, or SDO theorists can meet these challenges is a question for future research.

If the Alliance Theory is correct, it would suggest that politics is less of a morally principled enterprise than has been implied by some researchers (e.g. Graham et al., 2009; Koleva et al., 2012; Jost et al., 2003). Politics may instead reflect competition between individuals, groups, and their allies for power, status, and resources. In order to prevail in these competitions, individuals generate biased narratives that form the contents of political ideologies. People may claim that their political opinions derive from moral or philosophical reflection, but such reflection is unlikely to take precedence over evolutionarily ancient motives to defend one's allies and oppose one's enemies in social conflicts. Politics, according to this view, is not about ethical or philosophical belief systems, but is simply social life writ large.

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