



Presenting:

# **Making Decisions in a Polarized World**

**by Patrick Leach**

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# Making Decisions in a Polarized World

PATRICK LEACH

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# Dealing with increased polarization when making decisions

**What has caused increased polarization?**

**How do we deal with it?**

- In ourselves
- When facilitating or coaching

# Confirmation bias

**People naturally tend to seek out and preferentially believe evidence that supports what they already believe**

**People tend to ignore, deny, and sometimes even *fail to perceive* evidence that contradicts what they already believe**

Ref: Bazerman and Chugh

# The “Boulder v Colorado Springs” experiment

**People from Boulder in one group, Colorado Springs in the other**

- **Given three controversial topics to discuss**
- **Individuals record thoughts and positions ahead of time**

**Group discussions take place**

- **People record thoughts and positions afterward**

Ref: Sunstein and Hastie

# **“Boulder v Colorado Springs” – the results**

**Boulderites became a lot more liberal**

**Springers became a lot more conservative**

**Deliberation decreased diversity within each group**

- Commonly known information is shared; individually known information is not

**Deliberation sharply increased disparities between groups**

Ref: Sunstein and Hastie

# The Antisocial Network

“For all the hope that came with new people and new ways of connecting, new behaviors have emerged. We’ve found that online networks tend to listen more than to speak, to exclude more than to include. They’re helping you find people unlike you, but good at finding people like you. They’re helping you find those who share your outlook. *The new network ecosystem does not challenge biases; it reinforces them [emphasis added].*”

Ref: Brooking and Singer

The Russians are trolling, the Russians are trolling!

**“The aim is not to make you love Putin. The aim is to make you disbelieve anything. A disbelieving, fragile, unconscious audience is much easier to manipulate.”**

**- Russian propaganda expert**

**Disinformation campaigns are *common***

Ref: Brooking and Singer

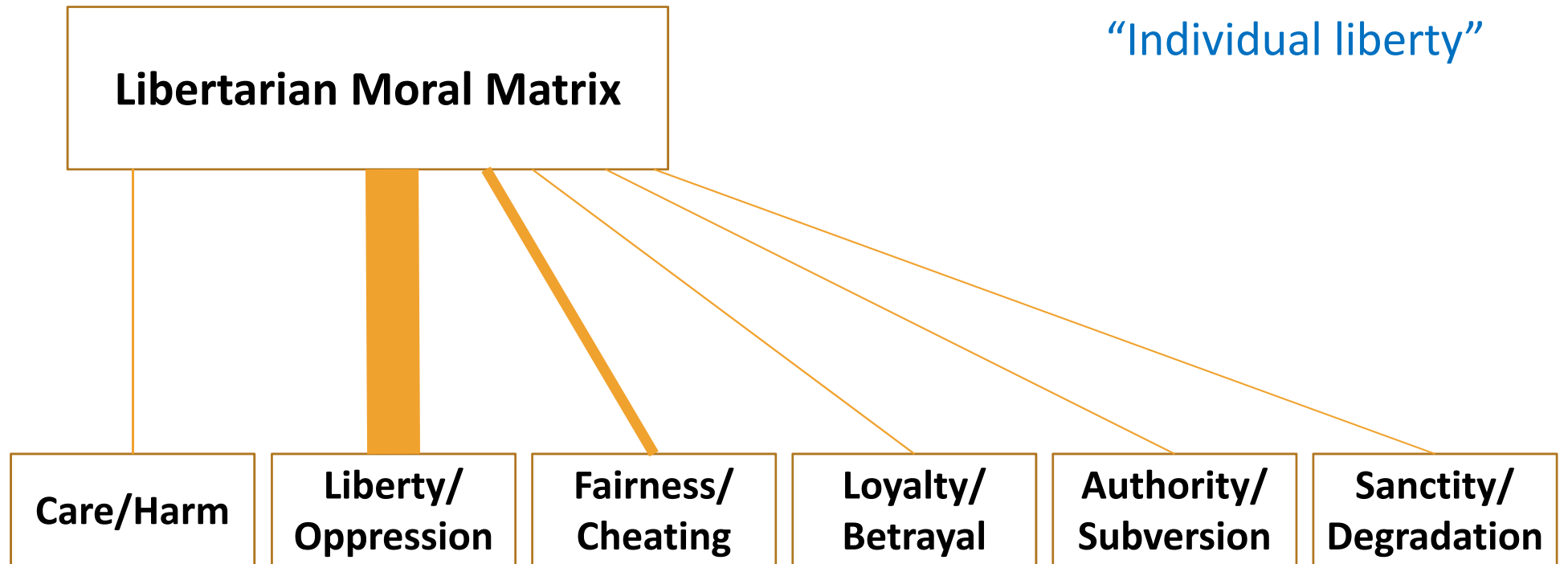


What can we do about this?

**Don't be a part of the problem**

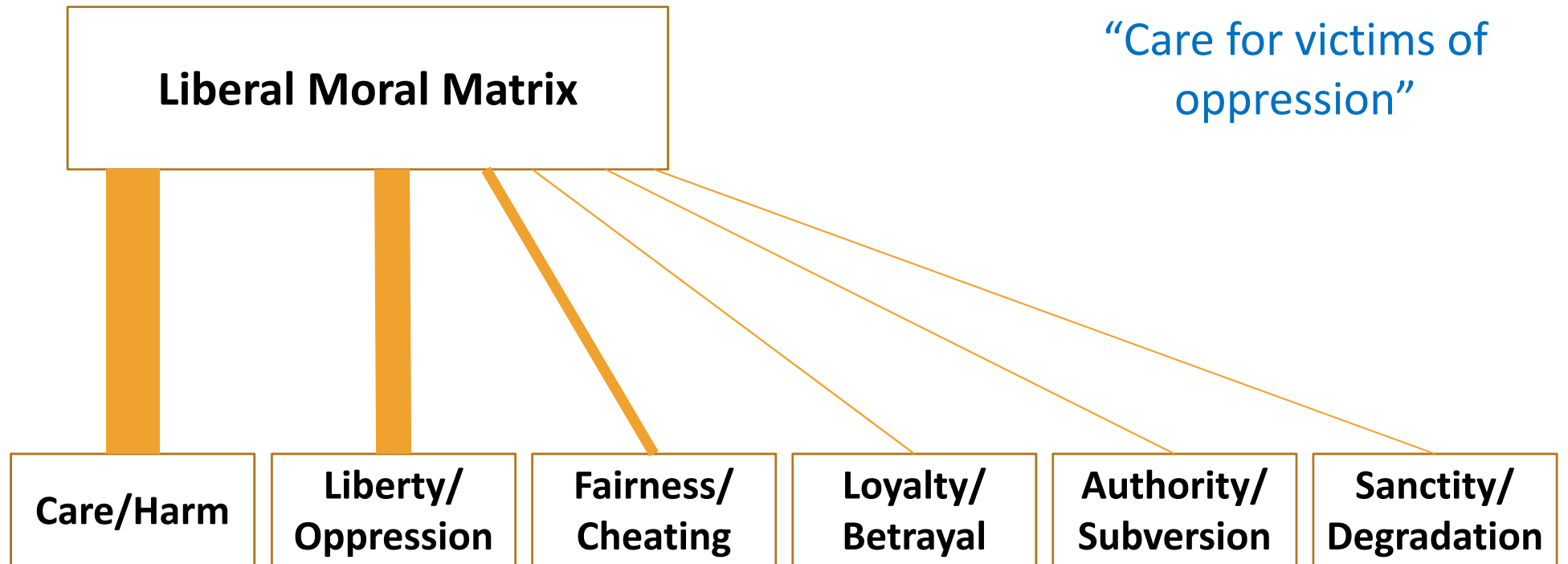
**Understand others' value systems**

# Value Systems



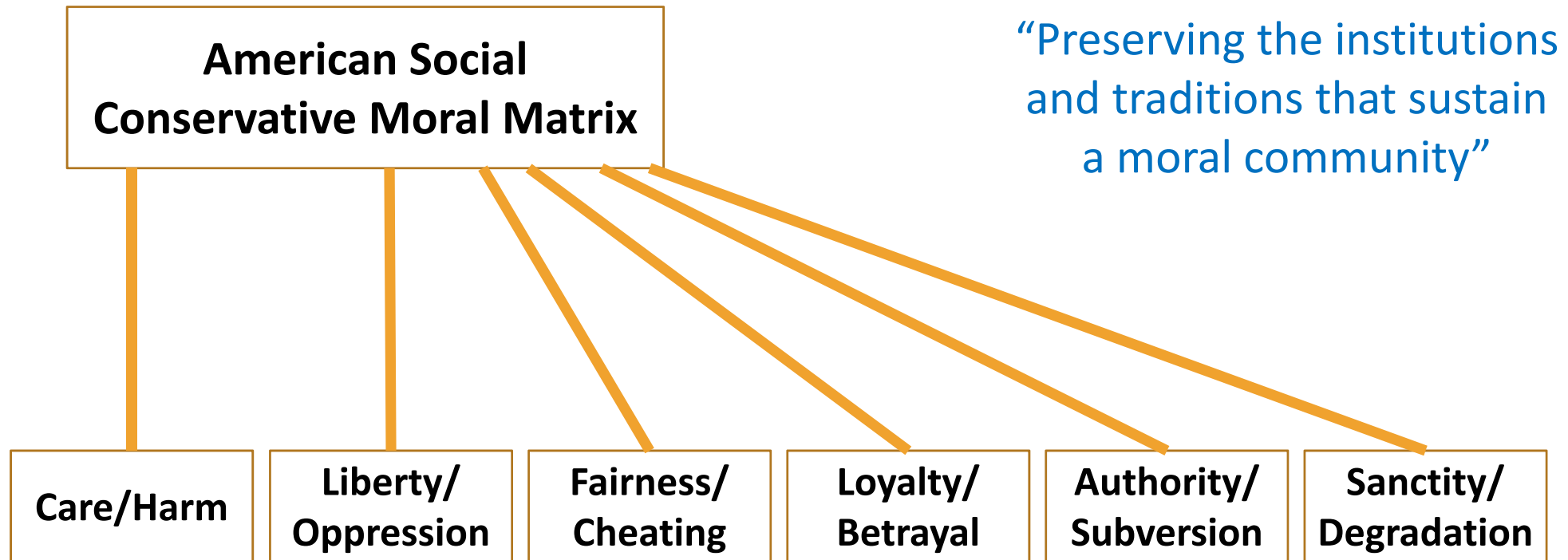
Ref: Jonathan Haidt

# Value Systems



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# Value Systems



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# What can we do about this (part 2)?

## When facilitating a group:

- Ask questions of *all* team members
- Use devil's advocate teams
- Educate team members about team dynamics and extremism
- Use people's "riders" to convince others' "elephants"

Ref: Jonathan Haidt

Ref: Sunstein &  
Hastie



# Summary

**Group discussions – especially through social media – exacerbate the problem of confirmation bias and push people to extreme positions**

**We must remain vigilant against this in ourselves**

**Facilitators need to guard against it in groups**

- **Different value systems**
- **Collect information individually**
- **Insist on “disagreeing without being disagreeable”**