I stand in firm affirmation of the resolution, Resolved: Humans are primarily driven by self interest.

I begin by offering two clarifications of terms to structure the debate.

First, according to Black's Law Dictionary, the word "primary" means First; **principal; chief**; leading.

Second, the word "self-interest" should be broadly construed to mean the pursuit of widely-shared goals. This presents the best possible definition for debate and investigation, as Jason Weeden of the Pennsylvania Laboratory for Experimental Evolutionary Psychology and Robert Kurzban of the University of Pennsylvania explain in 2017

<Jason Weeden, Pennsylvania Laboratory for Experimental Evolutionary Psychology, Robert Kurzban, University of Pennsylvania, "Self-Interest Is Often a Major Determinant of Issue Attitudes," Advances in Political Psychology, Vol. 38, Suppl. 1, 2017, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/pops.12392>#SPS

A Wider View of Self-Interest Having addressed the usual objections to self-interest effects, we now step back and take a wider view. What justifies equating self-interest with short-term material self-interest? Is there a plausible theory of human nature that would recommend that equation? In this section, we discuss our own view of self-interest, grounded in modern perspectives on humans. These days, not even economists typically believe that human motives are reducible to short-term material considerations. Standard economic perspectives posit individuals that **maximize their preferences.** These preferences might include getting more money in the short term, to be sure, but that by no means exhausts the list. People might also seek to gain prestige, have sex, assist their children in fulfilling their own preferences, or various other goals (Becker, 1996). But a perspective on self-interest that would be useful for purposes of large-scale empirical study cannot be one that views the advancing of self-interest as anything that helps a given individual get what they want at a given moment. While the equation of self-interest with short-term material self-interest is too restrictive, an overly individualized view of self-interest would be too loose. In the middle ground, we have proposed a view of self-interest that has some fealty to key aspects of the narrower views of self-interest, but one that acknowledges that typical human motives extend beyond short-term monetary ones (Weeden & Kurzban, 2014, chap. 2). We agree, for example, that it's preferable to ground notions of self-interest in widely shared goals rather than overly individual ones, that it's preferable to focus on goals with tangible implications, and that an explanation of competing political views will likely be driven by goals that have competitive social implications. We also agree that short-term economic goals fit the bill—the desire for more money in the short-term is a widely shared human goal, it has tangible implications, and it's an area where people compete over opposing outcomes. Where we part company is that we do not view short-term economic advancement as the only (or even the most important) widely shared, tangible, competitive human goal. Our own view of interests derives from our evolutionary approach, which views humans as social animals with minds designed to advance tangible, fitness-related goals (Kurzban, 2010; Petersen, 2016). **These goals are genetically selfish** (Dawkins, 1989)—that is, aimed at advancing the outcomes

of one's self and one's relatives—and involve competitive aspects of social life that have been biologically relevant throughout human existence, including satisfying immediate physiological needs (e.g., eating and finding shelter), defending one's self and valued others, establishing social ties, gaining and maintaining social status and esteem, attracting and retaining mates, and parenting (Kenrick, Griskevicius, Neuberg, & Schaller, 2010). Further, the social aspects of human life include nonrelatives sharing (to various degrees) a range of costs and benefits within coalitions and social networks. This is particularly true among close friends, who often share to a degree the benefits of each other's positive outcomes and the burdens of each other's negative outcomes (DeScioli & Kurzban, 2009; DeScioli, Kurzban, Koch, & Liben-Nowell, 2011) but also involves other kinds of networks (work colleagues, friends of friends, fellow church members, and so on). In short, we think that humans generally are motivated to advance outcomes across various evolutionarily relevant domains (including resources, social status, and mating lives) particularly among themselves, their relatives (in accordance with the degree of their relatedness), and members of their own social networks (in accordance with the closeness of the benefit-and-burden-sharing connection). While the narrow self-interest definition has focused on short-term economic matters—tracking political issues such immediate tax hikes or unemployment benefits for the currently unemployed—our evolutionary view expands the political terrain on which a tangible self-interest perspective can operate. As we explain below in the fifth section, we find interest-based demographic patterns involving not only issues of economic redistribution and provision of resources to the poor, but also issues of discrimination, meritocracy, and social status as well as issues affecting sexual and reproductive lifestyles. So is our view about "self-interest"? In a sense, no. Just as Dawkins (1989) discussed how (ultimately) selfish genes can produce individuals who behave at times nonselfishly, our view is one of social agents designed to behave genetically selfishly but not necessarily individually selfishly. On the other hand, as we mentioned, typical definitions of "self-interest" in political science explicitly include the interests of both one's self and one's family (e.g., Kinder, 1998; Sears & Funk, 1990). So a common political science usage of "self-interest" already contains a genetic expansion of self. Does our inclusion of social network members mean it's not "self-interest"? Not really, given that we view these considerations as a kind of indirect self-interest through shared benefits and burdens among individuals. Or perhaps it's only "self-interest" when we're talking about economic outcomes, but something else when we're talking about areas like social status or sexual lifestyles. But we view status and sex as tangible areas. Discrimination tangibly impacts everyday life. Restrictions on abortion and birth control tangibly impact everyday life. Thus, we have described our viewpoint as one that sees a major role for "self-interest" in political issue positions and political coalitions. We have also introduced the phrase "inclusive interests" (borrowing from the evolutionary term "inclusive fitness") as a reminder that we're talking about selfand-family interests across a range of evolutionarily salient social outcomes (Weeden & Kurzban, 2014, chap. 2).

Thus, it is the burden of the affirmative to prove that human beings are, more than any other single drive, motivated to advance their own goals and the goals of their close social networks. It is NOT the burden of the affirmative to prove that human beings are driven ONLY by self-interest, or only for their own personal survival. Rather, to win the debate,

the negative must provide evidence that some other goal is more powerful in most instances than self-interest.

I present two contentions to prove the affirmative case. Both contentions do not dispute the idea that human beings consciously desire to help others. Rather, two important factors prove that human beings *subconsciously* usually act on their own behalf. The first is Self-Other Merging, or One-Ness.

Human beings have a remarkable ability to identify with one another. Our ability to live with and cooperate with one another are proof of this. And it is this identification that makes even our most altruistic actions self-interested. When we act seemingly altruistically, it is actually caused by us seeing ourselves in the other person and then acting for the interest of ourself in them. Research by Robert B. Cialdini and collegues at the University of Arizona prove this phenomena:

<Robert B. Cialdini, Stephanie L. Brown, Brian P. Lewis, Carol Luce, and Steven L. Neuberg, all of the Department of Psychology, Arizona State University, "Reinterpreting the Empathy-Altruism Relationship: When One Into One Equals Oneness," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1997, Vol. 73, No. 3. 481-494, http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.473.5871&rep=rep1&type=pdf>#SPS

The data patterns of the three studies of this investigation are compelling in their consistency. In each, as relationship closeness increased, so did empathic concern for a needy other. In each, empathic concern significantly predicted willingness to help. And in each, it did so even after the influence of the egoistic factors of personal distress and sadness had been removed. More telling for the purposes of this research, however, was a fourth type of consistent internal replication: Invariably, when a nonaltruistic factor that covaries with empathic concern was introduced to the analyses, it reduced the impact of empathic concern to nonsignificance. That nonaltruistic factor, oneness, reflects a sense of interpersonal unity, wherein the conceptions of self and other are not distinct but are merged to some degree. The implications of these results for the empathy-altruism model are considerable. If the circumstances specified in the model as leading to truly altruistic acts (interpersonal closeness and perspective taking instructions) are the same circumstances that enhance the merging of self and other, as has been shown in the present studies as well as earlier studies (Aron et al., 1991; Aron et al., 1992; Davis et al., 1996), **then one can doubt whether those helpful acts reflect the selflessness required of true altruism.** As even the proponents of the model admit, **if self and other are not sharply distinct in a helper's mind, it is not possible to separate egoism from** altruism in **a helper's motive** (Batson, 1987; Batson, in press; Batson & Shaw, 1991). After all, as the self and other increasingly merge, helping the other increasingly helps the self. Moreover, one can doubt the empathy-altruism hypothesis even further when, as we have demonstrated, oneness both covaries with empathic concern and is the functional mediator of helping when the two factors are considered simultaneously. That is, although relationship closeness elevated the levels of both factors, only one (perceived oneness) predicted helping when the influence of the other factor was controlled. Overall, then, our findings suggest that empathic concern may have only

appeared to mediate aid in much prior research because it is a concomitant of **perceived oneness**, a construct that offers a **nonaltruistic path to such aid**.

This merging of the self and other prevents even our best intentions of altruism from being realized. This is especially true of people in our personal "networks" as described by Weeden and Kurzban. Stefan Sturmer and colleagues from Christian Albrechts University in Kiev support this interepretation

<Stefan, Alexandra Kropp, Birte Siem, Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, and Mark Snyder, University of Minnesota, "Empathy-Motivated Helping: The Moderating Role of Group Membership," PSPB, Vol. 32 No. 7, July 2006 943-956, DOI: 10.1177/0146167206287363>#SPS

The main objective of the two laboratory experiments presented here was to test a group-level perspective on empathy-motivated helping. Informed by an evolutionary perspective on human altruism (e.g., Burnstein et al., 1994; Cunningham, 1986; also Park & Schaller, 2005) and building on the idea of psychological essentialism (e.g., Medin & Ortony, 1989; Rothbart & Taylor, 1992), our group-level perspective suggests that similar group membership between the helper and the target strengthens the role of empathy in helping, whereas dissimilar group membership renders empathy motivated helping less likely. In line with this perspective and confirming our specific Empathy × Group Membership Moderation hypothesis, each experiment demonstrated that empathy had a stronger effect on helping when the helpee was an ingroup member than when the helpee was an outgroup member. Including Stürmer et al.'s (2005) studies, the Empathy × Group Membership Moderation hypothesis has thus been confirmed in four different studies employing different research methodologies (field research vs. controlled experimentation) and focusing on different intergroup contexts (natural vs. artificial groups) and different helping criteria (helping intentions vs. actual help). In addition, other researchers have observed similar ingroup/outgroup differences in empathy-motivated helping (e.g., Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). The convergence of empirical evidence thus speaks strongly and persuasively for the validity and generalizability of a group-level perspective on empathy. Some researchers have hypothesized that empathy may affect helping across ingroup/outgroup boundaries (e.g., Batson et al., 1997). Given the research reported earlier (including the present experiments), it seems more likely, however, that as ingroup/outgroup distinctions are salient, empathy-motivated helping is typically restricted to "us," whereas empathy-motivated helping across group boundaries to "them" is less likely. From our group-level perspective, one could argue, however, that the likelihood of empathy-motivated outgroup helping increases as the outgroup is perceived as relatively similar to the ingroup. This should be so because perceptions of intergroup similarities should facilitate the attribution of a common essence shared by members of both the ingroup and the outgroup. In fact, a recent experimental study in the context of intercultural helping provides encouraging evidence for this reasoning (Siem & Stürmer, 2005). Some may wonder why our experiments—which demonstrated significant ingroup/outgroup differences in the role of empathy—did not also show significant ingroup/outgroup differences in the amount of help provided or in the strength of the intentions to do so. With regard to this issue, it should be taken into account that our experiments tested the effects of ingroup/outgroup

categorizations in a very benign contact situation (in which students conversed with a fellow student in a research laboratory). As documented by previous research, overt outgroup discrimination in helping in such situations is rare (see Saucier et al., 2005). For the present experiments it seems quite possible for instance that the benign nature of contact in our experiments facilitated motivational processes that led participants to help outgroup members despite a lack of empathic motivation to do so (e.g., normative considerations and/or the desire to appear unprejudiced, Gaertner and Dovidio, 1977; Pryor et al., 2004). In intergroup contexts that are marked by conflict and animosity, such "compensatory" processes may be less likely to produce intergroup helping. Accordingly, in such contexts the consequences of the lack of empathic motivation should be far more severe, with outgroupers being unlikely to be helped or even actively discriminated against in helping. The design of our experiments on empathy does not allow us to precisely delineate the processes that led our participants to help an outgroup target, and we acknowledge this as a major limitation of the present work. It is telling, however, that in both experiments none of the "need-related" emotions (empathy, sadness, distress) that were in the focus of our research proved as a significant predictor of outgroup helping. At a more general level, this observation falls in line with previous research suggesting that when people contemplate offering help to an outgroup member they may be generally more hesitant to let themselves be guided by spontaneous experiences and base their decision on systematic and controlled information processing instead (e.g., Pryor et al., 2004). Before closing, we also wish to comment on important implications of our experiments for research on the relationships among empathy, interpersonal oneness, and helping. Cialdini and colleagues suggested that empathy serves merely as an emotional signal for interpersonal oneness, and that it is the perception of oneness and not empathy that ultimately promotes helping (Cialdini et al., 1997; Maner et al., 2002). In fact, in both Experiments 1 and 2, in the ingroup conditions, our measures of empathy and interpersonal oneness were positively correlated, $rs \geq .33$, $ps \leq .064$. Moreover, in both experiments, in the ingroup conditions, interpersonal oneness emerged as a unique predictor of helping intentions (or helping) even when empathy, sadness, and distress were considered as additional predictors. However, in contrast to Cialdini et al.'s (1997) perspective but in line with our reasoning, in these analyses empathy was also a significant and unique predictor of helping intentions (or helping). Based on the present findings (and other research demonstrating a unique role of empathy in helping, e.g., Batson et al., 1997; Stürmer et al., 2005, Study 2), instead of assuming that empathy serves merely as a signal for oneness, it could be argued that empathy and interpersonal oneness may in fact represent two related but distinct sources of people's motivation to help. Cialdini and colleagues investigated the role of oneness in the context of cues indicating relationship closeness (Cialdini et al., 1997; Maner et al., 2002), whereas our own research focused on helping a stranger who happened to be an ingroup or an outgroup member. One might speculate then that the relevance of interpersonal oneness on one hand and feelings of empathy on the other hand in helping is contingent on the salience of different kinds of relationship cues, with oneness-based helping being more closely tied to cues indicating familiarity and close interpersonal relationships and empathy-based helping being more closely tied to perceptions of selfother similarity. CONCLUSION A starting point of the present research was the proposition that the motivations for helping "us" versus helping "them" are often of a fundamentally different nature (see Dovidio et al., 1997; Omoto & Snyder, 2002;

Simon et al., 2000; Stürmer et al., 2005). Our two experiments clearly substantiate this proposition in that they show that even in benign intergroup encounters, **empathy is "deactivated" as a significant motivator of helping outgroup members.** Our group-level perspective suggests that the role of empathy in helping is contingent on perceived group-level (dis)similarities. Accordingly, intervention programs designed to emphasize commonalities rather than differences between groups could provide promising opportunities to increase empathymotivated outgroup helping.

Our second contention is Motivated Reasoning. The human brain has the remarkable ability to mislead us. We often see what we want to see and feel what we want to feel, despite the evidence of reality. This is true when it comes to altruistic behavior. The primary decision is made by our brains to advance our self-interest, but our brain than deludes us to think that we have done it altruistically. Weeden and Kurzban explain the phenomena in 2016:

Our take is neither partisan nor polite, and might make many uncomfortable. Our explanation for political disagreements begins with something obvious but often overlooked: The policies people fight over have real-life consequences that help some people and harm others. In our view, all sides typically seek to advance their interests and are hypocritical in the way they present their views. No side is particularly motivated by being fair or reasonable or public-spirited. Indeed, when it comes to policy disputes, we think that one's perceptions of what's "fair" or "reasonable" are themselves typically driven by one's interests. People are generally neither boobs nor saboteurs, but social animals competing over advantages for themselves, their families, and their social networks. It doesn't take one very far to divide the country (much less the whole of humanity) into two or three ideological boxes. If one wants to understand the variety of public opinion, one needs to think about specifics. The key, we have argued, is to look at people's lives and interests, focusing on demographic features that provide clues to the particular outcomes that will help or harm them. On sexual and reproductive issues, differences in Freewheeler and Ring-Bearer lifestyles help determine whether people gain or lose when higher costs are placed on Freewheeler lifestyles—when casual sex carries moral costs, when partying carries legal costs, and when family planning is restricted. These lifestyles influence people's decisions to affiliate with or avoid religious groups. People's religious and lifestyle patterns strongly predict their views on issues related to premarital sex, pornography, abortion, birth control, and marijuana legalization. About group-based issues, we proposed that the two key factors in determining people's competing interests are, first, group identities (race, religion, etc.) and, second, accumulated human capital (education and related cognitive abilities). Analogous to talented African American baseball players in our allegory, people with lots of human capital who are also members of traditionally subordinate groups do better when the rules abolish group-based barriers and give advantages to those with lots of human capital. Analogous to less talented white baseball players in our allegory, people with less human capital do better when advantages are given to their own groups and other groups are held back. People's views on issues involving sexual orientation, religion, immigration, and race are well predicted by their group identities and levels of human capital. Finally, on economic issues, people differ not only in how much they stand to benefit (or lose) when wealth is redistributed, but also in, first, how

much they might need hard-times programs in the future and, second, how much they might rely on their own social groups and private charities when hard times hit. So, while income predicts people's economic views to a degree, race, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and human capital are also important for understanding and predicting preferences for public hard-times programs. **Because people generally adopt issue opinions that advance their multifaceted inclusive interests, they wind up frequently adopting, buffet-like, sets of particular views that fall outside of a simple left-right framework.** When someone's interests point to "liberal" policy preferences on one set of issues and to "conservative" policy preferences on a different set of issues, that's usually how things turn out. Focusing on interests points the way to finding people who are typically liberal, typically conservative, typically libertarian, and typically whatever-we-shouldcall-the-opposite-of-libertarian, along with other nameless position profiles that are completely absent from the usual discussions of the political map. We view it as a good sign that our efforts line up with certain aspects of political targeting by campaign professionals, the people who get paid to get such things right. We have tried to add to these perspectives by providing a psychological framework that can reveal interests in play in a wide range of issues (beyond the usual suspects involving economic redistribution). In particular, instead of viewing "social" or "cultural" or "religious" issues as symbolic and disconnected from the concrete concerns of real life, we've made the case that battles over sexual lifestyles and social status regimes have real-life effects as concrete as the results of fights over money. Without necessarily knowing the real reasons, across a range of policy areas, people are motivated to seek outcomes that advance the everyday goals of themselves, their families, their friends, and their wider circles of social allies. On that point, we've also argued that human minds are designed for spin, to hide their strategic foundations behind socially attractive veneers. The Public Relations Departments of people's minds craft stories about the benevolent wisdom of their own views and the malevolent idiocy of their opponents' views, with Spokespersons almost wholly ignorant of the nature of the game. Public political discourse is frequently a battle between prickly Spokespersons fighting over made-up stories that have little to do with the underlying motives of people's mental Boards of Directors. Admitting that one's political opponents would often be worse off under one's own policy preferences interferes with the goal of advancing one's own agenda. People's desires to advance favorable policy outcomes typically trump any desire to express coherent views of themselves and others. Observers can predict, with error, to be sure, other people's political positions and priorities by taking into account the other person's inclusive interests, considering their religion, lifestyle, sexual orientation, race, immigration status, education, intelligence, income, and so forth, despite the fact that most people are themselves unaware that these interest-relevant features are important in shaping their own views. In fact, most people, most of the time, will strongly deny, for example, that their opposition to abortion has anything to do with suppressing others' sexual promiscuity. Virtually no one says they favor meritocracy because it helps smart people like themselves beat less-smart people in social competitions. People's Public Relations Departments don't let their Spokespersons know such things, let alone say them out loud; they are the kinds of accounts, indeed, that people find insulting, regardless of how well the accounts explain the facts. We think we've provided the basics to understand these kinds of political opinions, but we acknowledge the limits of the approach. We don't want to give the impression that we think our view explains

the totality of the expanse of American political opinion. People are, in a word, complicated. We think we've given a foundation that is really useful, but it's obvious there's more to the story.

Here, the proof is in the attitudes. People generally take positions on issues that will benefit them – all while insisting that they are entirely disinterested in benefits for themselves. Again, Weeden and Kurzban lay out the evidence –

<Jason Weeden, Pennsylvania Laboratory for Experimental Evolutionary Psychology, Robert Kurzban, University of Pennsylvania, "Self-Interest Is Often a Major Determinant of Issue Attitudes," Advances in Political Psychology, Vol. 38, Suppl. 1, 2017, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/pops.12392>#SPS

We used General Social Survey (GSS) data to run basic tests of many of these straightforward statements (Weeden & Kurzban, 2014, chap. 2). In most cases, our interpretation of the results contrasts sharply with Kinder's summary. We found, for example, that 74% of the unemployed thought that it should be the government's responsibility to provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed, and 57% thought that government spending on unemployment benefits should be increased; these opinions were in marked contrast to people working full time, among whom only 46% and 27% agreed, respectively. These results echo longitudinal studies finding substantial effects of unemployment on economic policy views (Margalit, 2013; Owens & Pedulla, 2014). We therefore resist the conclusion that the "unemployed do not line up behind policies designed to alleviate economic distress." Similarly, we found large racial differences in views on race-based workplace affirmative action. Some might say that this is a case of group interest and not self-interest, but we went further into individual circumstances. In particular, African Americans who feared losing jobs to Whites supported affirmative action more than African Americans who did not fear such losses; at the same time, Whites who feared losing jobs to African Americans opposed affirmative action more than Whites who did not fear such losses. One might call this a self-interest-laden case of group interest, or, if one prefers, a group-interest-laden case of self-interest. These analyses suggest that affirmative action views are related to "personal harms and benefits." On the claim about the "medically indigent," similar to other studies (e.g., Henderson & Hillygus, 2011), we found that poorer people and those lacking medical coverage supported government help with healthcare more than richer people and those who had health coverage. Also in line with other studies (e.g., Wolpert & Gimpel, 1998), we found gun owners to be substantially more opposed to gun ownership restrictions than nonowners. In a final example, while Kinder claimed that differences in income generally do not give rise to differences in opinion, we found that when we looked at opinions relating squarely to whether the government should reduce income differences and provide for the poor, there were in fact substantial correlations with income. These findings align with a large number of studies noting important differences in policy preferences between the rich and the poor (e.g., Gilens, 2012; Hacker & Pierson, 2010). In sum, **while it is often said that self-interest is of minimal importance to issue attitudes, the case is weak.** Such claims rely on a narrow definition of self-interest and on viewing what are surely closely related phenomena (like demographic effects and group interest) as irrelevant or even as evidence against self-interest. In addition, the list of

exceptions is substantial, growing, and seems to cut to the heart of the narrowed definition of self-interest. And, further, when we look at self-interestminimizing examples on their face, accepting for purposes of the exercise the narrow definition of self-interest, many of the specific supporting claims are arguably misleading. We therefore conclude that the change that occurred from the original version of The American Voter to its revisited version was not due to basic changes in how Americans choose their positions. Despite efforts to make it disappear, self-interest was visible then and remains visible today. To be clear, we're not saying that self-interest is the only determinant that matters, or that it always matters, or related extreme positions. But when it comes to issues impacting short-term material positions, short-term material self-interest is often one of the major determinants of individuals' opinions.