Actions versus Consequences in Political Arguments: Insights from Moral Psychology

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A striking characteristic of moral judgments is that people commonly assign value to particular actions, irrespective of what consequences the actions bring about. This phenomenon might be important to understanding *political* judgments, when people frequently purport to stand on principle, even when doing so comes at a substantial cost. Here, I draw on work in psychology that might help identify which citizens are insensitive to consequences in the context of political argumentation. I find that a particular facet of attitude intensity (moral conviction) identifies citizens who think about political issues in absolutist terms (studies 1 and 2) and who dismiss damaging information about policy consequences (studies 3 and 4). These results develop understanding of what attributes make different political arguments compelling to different people and illustrate the utility of attitude intensity measures as a way to account for the atomized and disorganized nature of political opinions.

Death penalty opponents draw on two distinct kinds of argument to support their views. For some, the key consideration is the policy's effects. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) writes: "The death penalty has no deterrent effect. Former claims that each execution deters a certain number of murders have been thoroughly discredited by social science research" (ACLU 2007, 2). Because of the nature of the argument, if it were credibly shown that the death penalty does deter crime, the ACLU might be compelled to reconsider its stance. Other death penalty opponents put effects of the policy aside and base their opposition on the intrinsic characteristics of the issue. One commentator in an online forum explained his opposition this way: "[The death penalty] is just another word for revenge, and the desire for revenge is one of the lowest human emotions" (Schroth 2008). This individual might not feel obliged to lessen his opposition, even if it were to become clear that the death penalty is an effective deterrent.

Philosophers have a word for the second kind of argument: it is *deontological*. Whereas some ethical frameworks focus on the consequences of actions, deontological ethics revolves around rules that are insensitive to consequences. Lying, a strict deontologist might argue, is wrong by its very nature, with the consequences it brings about—did the lie save a life?—being quite irrelevant (Kant [1785] 1964). Of course, very few citizens know what deontology means. Their understanding of even the broad terms liberal and conservative is crude at best (Converse 1964; Kinder and Kalmoe 2017), and deontology is more obscure concept.

Then again, recent advances in psychology hint at an intriguing possibility. Researchers have suggested that the human mind has two distinct processes for making normative judgments, each active in different circumstances (Cushman 2013, for an overview). As I elaborate below, one process—perhaps the more apparent one—focuses on the consequences that stem from a choice, executing some version of cost/benefit analysis. The other process assigns value to actions themselves, with consequences taking a smaller role or perhaps no role at all. The latter framework orients individuals to adhere to prescriptions and proscriptions, even at a substantial cost. In this sense, deontology appears to have an analog in the human mind. Despite citizens' lack of familiarity with deontology as an ethical framework, there are times when they think and behave as intuitive deontologists.

The possibility that citizens sometimes behave as intuitive deontologists might help elucidate striking aspects of polit-

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ical behavior. For instance, citizens sometimes apply an issue-focused litmus tests, refusing to vote for an otherwise-appealing candidate who wavers in a key area (e.g., abortion policy; Abramowitz 1995). Many citizens balk at using cash payments to help resolve symbolic political disputes, such as the Arab/Israeli conflict (Ginges et al. 2007). As the American civil rights movement and the Arab Spring illustrate, people occasionally even risk their lives and livelihoods to take to the street in support of the causes they favor. The common theme across these and other examples is that a particular attitudinal commitment appears preeminent—substantial trade-offs notwithstanding.

Who will act in this way? An obstacle to integrating the findings from psychology into the study of political behavior is that it is difficult to say. One straightforward possibility is that a deontological mind-set simply reflects having an intense attitude about some political matter. This possibility seems reasonable at first blush, but it falters against instances when people appear to have intense attitudes but are still willing to apply a cost/benefit framework. The buyer and seller of a house have antithetical attitudes about the price but fully expect to reconcile the difference via concessions. In a political context, legislators routinely engage in logrolling, not because they are indifferent to concessions but rather because the concessions lead to greater gains. Because people are sometimes willing to trade one dimension against another, and sometimes not, it seems plausible that some attitudes, although in some respects comparable in intensity, are qualitatively different in the reasoning styles they summon.

This article attempts to bridge gaps among findings in psychology and then assess how they relate to politics. First, I review evidence that there is a mode of psychological processing that assigns value to actions directly, irrespective of consequences. Next, I suggest that a particular facet of attitude intensity—moral conviction—likely corresponds with a deontological processing style in which the very notion of weighing costs and benefits against each other seems improper. The empirical work that follows examines whether this characterization holds up in political contexts. Studies 1 and 2 examine whether moral conviction, more than other aspects of attitude intensity, identifies instances when people prefer their political views to be described in deontological (rather than consequentialist) language. Studies 3 and 4 test whether characterizing moral conviction as a marker of a deontological processing style enhances understanding of political persuasion. Specifically, study 3 tests whether moral conviction (relative to other facets of attitude intensity) identifies citizens who are insensitive to attitude-inconsistent information about a policy's consequences. Study 4 offers a new take on persuasive messaging in politics. Whereas past work contemplates argument strength in an undifferentiated way—if an argument is strong for one person, it should also be strong for another—I test the possibility that persuasion is more likely when there is a match between a person's processing style and the sort of message she is contemplating. Indeed, I find that moral conviction identifies who is persuaded by deontological versus consequence-focused arguments.

The research herein is a stylistic departure from some existing approaches to the study of political persuasion, which place greatest emphasis on individual-level factors that moderate persuadability—in particular a person's partisan identity (e.g., Cohen 2003), ideological leaning (Nyhan and Reifler 2010), or level of political involvement (Miller and Krosnick 1996). In contrast, I examine attitude-level characteristics that moderate how people respond to persuasion efforts.[1] Nevertheless, these studies offer new traction on durable questions. What attributes make political arguments compelling? Do people change their opinions more in response to hard evidence about consequences stemming from different alternatives? Or to arguments about inherent right and wrong? I close with a broader discussion of how the study of attitude intensity can improve research on political persuasion.

DEONTOLOGICAL PROCESSING

Rationality, by one canonical definition, is "behavior that is appropriate to specified goals in the context of a given situation" (Simon 1985, 294). But how do individuals assess what behavior is "appropriate"? One familiar framework, closely associated with neoclassical economics, suggests that people engage in cost/benefit reasoning. They calculate the probability of the different outcomes that might result from each of the alternatives open to them and choose the option that generates the highest expected utility. In short, they focus on consequences.

A contrasting framework emphasizes difficulties inherent in cost/benefit reasoning: people might not have internally consistent preferences. There might be too many choices available to contemplate each one. People might have too flimsy a causal model of the world to assign probabilities to various outcomes with any degree of confidence. They might not understand how the different possible outcomes relate to their particular goals. With these limitations in mind, Herbert Simon introduced the notion of "procedural" rationality: using a "reasonable process" (given cognitive limitations)

1. I do not mean to suggest that I am the first to do so (see, e.g., Taber, Cann, and Kucsova 2009).

to reach a decision. Simon (1985) memorably offered satisficing and heuristic-based decision making as examples of such reasonable processes. These strategies are sure to err on occasion, but they are still rational in the broader procedural sense.

Subsequent work on judgment and decision making positions action-oriented valuation as a legitimate alternative to cost/benefit reasoning (Bennis, Medin, and Bartels 2010; Cushman 2013; Greene 2007, for excellent discussions). Cost/benefit reasoning is difficult—first, because it relies on a developed causal model of the world and, second, because applying such a model taxes cognitive resources. Rather than extrapolating what the effects of different choices will be, one might "[assign] value to actions intrinsically based on past experience" (Cushman 2013, 274).[2] On one level, this idea is counterintuitive: how could expected consequences not matter? Then again, there are numerous instances in which people circumscribe their behavior because they view actions themselves as being required or prohibited and not because of any expected positive or negative consequences: people leave tips in restaurants they will never visit again; they obey laws even when they would not be caught; they contribute to collective goods even when there is no enforcement mechanism (Levitt and List 2007, for one discussion).

The phenomenon has been demonstrated empirically. The most prominent demonstrations come from a cottage industry of so-called trolley studies, in which subjects reach drastically different conclusions about whether a trade-off (e.g., sacrificing one life to save five) is appropriate, depending on the particular action required to initiate the trade-off (e.g., pushing a person in front of a runaway trolley vs. flipping a switch to divert the trolley to different tracks; Mikhail 2007). Beyond the trolley studies, many survey respondents assert that there is no amount of money that they would accept to commit certain acts, such as to "slap your father in the face (with his permission) as part of a comedy skit" or "Cook and eat your dog, after it dies of natural causes" (Graham, Haidt, and Nosek 2009, 1045). Similarly, when subjects were asked whether they would open up a river dam to save 20 species of fish, if it meant killing two species of fish, many said they would not, since they would not want to "cause" the death of any species (Ritov and Baron 1999; see also Tetlock et al. [2000] on "taboo" trade-offs). Subjects also exhibit physiological aversion to performing pretend harmful actions, such as smashing an experiment's "hand" (shown to be a rubber hand placed in the experimenter's sleeve cuff) with a rock or bludgeoning a baby doll against a table (Cushman et al. 2012).

Viewed in a cost/benefit framework, these and other instances (Bennis et al. 2010, for a review) of consequence insensitivity are peculiar. Then again, there is reason to think that they—and action-oriented valuation more generally—are rational in Simon's procedural sense. A literature in machine learning finds that, especially when the choice space is large and complicated, it can be preferable to assign value to actions themselves, based on past positive and negative associations, rather than trying to calculate expected effects (Cushman 2013, esp. 277–79; see also Mikhail 2007). Likewise, anthropology-oriented psychologists argue that having a mental capacity for learning behavioral rules (i.e., action valuations) is adaptive because it would solve small group coordination problems that existed in our evolutionary past (DeScioli and Kurzban 2009, 2013). Given this convergence, it seems reasonable to characterize deontology as a psychological *mode* in which judgments stem from the inherent appropriateness of an action, rather than consequences. Indeed, the existence of this characteristic style of mental processing might be what gives deontological ethics some intuitive appeal. As neuroscientist Joshua Greene states the case, "consequentialist and deontological views of philosophy are not so much philosophical inventions as they are philosophical manifestations of two dissociable psychological patterns, two different ways of moral thinking, that have been part of the human repertoire for thousands of years" (2007, 37–38; see also Greene 2013).

CONNECTING DEONTOLOGICAL PROCESSING TO POLITICS

Although there is substantial evidence that humans have a mode of processing that assigns value to actions while diminishing the significance of consequences, there is no particular reason to think that everyone will perceive the same actions as having intrinsic value. On the contrary: when researchers have attempted to catalog social rules cross-culturally, or across time, they find remarkable variety (Haidt 2012). Anthropological studies are replete with examples of local taboos, such as against eating specific meats, parents and children sharing a bed, charging interest on loans, a woman dining simultaneously with her husband and his brother, or dancing (Shweder 2012). There also appear to be changes over time, as evolving views of cigarette smoking in the United States illustrate (Rozin 1999). Even more, the simple observation that vegetarians and nonvegetarians live in close proximity illustrates that there is diversity even within particular localities at the same time. This is not to say that there are no points of

2. The phrase "based on past experience" is vulnerable to misinterpretation. Individuals do not need to have performed an action (e.g., stealing) themselves to develop a negative association with it. They can also learn by socialization (e.g., teachers and parents who forbid stealing) or observation (e.g., seeing what happens to someone else who steals; Cushman 2013, 284).

commonality.[3] But there is ample evidence that people differ in the rules and prohibitions they perceive.

How are political scientists to account for this diversity, such that they might begin to characterize deontological processing—its prevalence on different issues (and different sides of particular issues), its antecedents, how it changes over time, and so on? One promising approach is to examine citizens' sense of morality. Bennis et al. (2010, 198) point to a number of "special characteristics of the moral domain such that rules requiring the decision maker not to weigh costs and benefits might be preferred." Foremost among these is that cost/benefit-based strategies can make social cooperation difficult or impossible to sustain, while rule-based strategies can facilitate cooperation. For instance, cost/benefit analysis dictates that a particular individual should free ride in contributing to public goods, but when a group applies a rule against free riding, all are better off (Marwell and Ames 1981). In widely discussed work, Axelrod's (1984) prisoner's dilemma tournaments showed that rule-based strategies (most famously tit for tat) outperformed strategies that sought to maximize gains in a particular interaction.

It augurs well for the proposal that deontological processing and morality are linked to each other that people appear to perceive the moral domain in a distinctive way. When asked their opinions about political topics (e.g., whether marijuana should be legalized), people vary in the extent to which they report their own opinions to be "connected to [their] core moral beliefs and convictions" (Skitka, Bauman, and Sargis 2005, 899). In the parlance of psychology, they vary in the *metacognitions* that come to mind as they contemplate political topics. It might have been that this variance simply reflected a general form of attitude intensity (cf. Petty and Krosnick 1995), such as caring about the topic, but dozens of independent studies have shown that this metacognition—termed *moral conviction*—is not reducible to other facets of attitude intensity (Skitka 2010; Skitka, Washburn, and Carsel 2015, for reviews). Attitudes that are intense in every other measurable way still vary in whether people see them as being morally relevant, and so moral conviction appears to be a sui generis phenomenon.

Measuring moral conviction is a bottom-up approach to characterizing what, psychologically speaking, is in the moral domain. Individuals are asked whether some attitude connects to their sense of right and wrong, and the researcher takes the responses at face value. This approach might come as counterintuitive, since people commonly suppose that a person's sense of morality derives from a more general consideration, such as a system of values (Rokeach 1973), a taste for different "foundations" (Graham et al. 2009), or a perception of harm (Schein and Gray 2015). The moral conviction paradigm is not at odds with these possibilities. It merely frames them as hypotheses to be tested. In the context of public opinion research, the highly agnostic perspective that characterizes moral conviction research has a major advantage. As a general matter, political opinions lack coherence: they appear not to be constrained by an overarching belief system (Kinder and Kalmoe 2017). But the lack of constraint does not mean that particular attitudes are unimportant or epiphenomenal. On the contrary, issue attitudes can drive political realignments (Adams 1997) and powerfully moderate how citizens respond to political messages (Hillygus and Shields 2008). A bottom-up approach is attentive to the very real possibility that moralization is atomized and disorganized and therefore in need of a granular measurement approach (cf. Pizarro 2007).[4]

AIMS OF THE CURRENT STUDIES

The broad proposition of this article is that political attitudes held with moral conviction are associated with a characteristically deontological (i.e., action-oriented) processing style: in particular, that they reflect a tendency to eschew the practice of weighing costs against benefits. To be sure, this is not the first research to characterize morally convicted attitudes as distinctive. For instance, compared to attitudes that are intense in other ways, morally convicted attitudes are experienced as objective and universal (Morgan, Skitka, and Lytle 2014), lead people to resist conformity pressures (Hornsey, Smith, and Begg 2007), and are associated with intolerance of disagreement (Cole Wright, Cullum, and Schwab 2008; Tagar et al. 2014).[5] But two features distinguish the current studies. First, rejecting cost/benefit analysis is not redundant with these other properties. (For instance, a legislator might think that her preferred health care policy is objectively the best but still conclude that the benefits of agreeing to an alternative outweigh the costs of intransigence.) As such, the studies below hone in on a separate, politically significant, and underexplored facet of moral conviction. Second, the studies below

3. See Bloom (2013), esp. chap. 1, for an excellent discussion of moral universals.

4. Kinder describes the notion of atomized attitudes eloquently: "Innocent as typical Americans may be of ideological principles, they are hardly innocent of political ideas. Such ideas, however, defy parsimonious description" (1983, 401). Similarly, Converse writes, "A realistic picture of political belief systems in the mass public, then, is not one that omits issues and policy demands completely nor one that presumes widespread ideological coherence; it is rather one that captures with some fidelity the fragmentation, narrowness, and diversity of these demands" (1964, 247).

5. See Skitka et al. (2015) for a much more complete review of moral conviction research.

focus on political argumentation: the frameworks citizens use to present their own views and respond to arguments from others. I look for indicia of deontological thinking on both sides of the endeavor of political persuasion.

A potential objection to the main proposition herein—that moral conviction is associated with deontological processing—is that it might be driven by random noise. Perhaps individuals provide arbitrary responses to the moral conviction questions and then render judgments consistent with those arbitrary responses. This concern is diminished by known properties of the moral conviction measure. Moral conviction exhibits reasonably high over-time stability—almost exactly on par with other facets of attitude intensity (Skitka et al. 2015). As such, responses to the battery are not arbitrary or random.[6]

A second potential objection about the proposition is that it is foreordained: perhaps it could not be otherwise. But an alternative possibility has more than a drop of plausibility: people might develop moral convictions in favor of or against some policies because they perceive the policies to have liked or disliked consequences. This relationship would be in keeping with research finding that opinions, and the rationales offered to justify them, follow reflexively from liking or disliking outcomes (Sniderman et al. 1986), not to mention a long philosophical tradition (Consequentialism) that stipulates consequences to be the locus of right and wrong (e.g., Bentham [1776] 1988). Moreover, the relationship posited herein is more specific than what many would assume. By far, the most common practice in political science is to think of attitude intensity as a single undifferentiated concept (Miller and Peterson 2004, esp. 860–62, for a discussion). In this vein, scholars and laypeople alike routinely attribute deontological behavior (e.g., rejecting reasonable compromises) to a vague and generic psychological concept: extremism (e.g., Gutmann and Thompson 2012). Isolating the particular facets of extremism that promote obstructionism is an important step forward.

The studies below proceed in two parts. Studies 1 and 2 examine how citizens cognize their own political opinions: Is there evidence that moral conviction is associated with a deontological mind-set? In particular, for morally convicted individuals, does an argument couched in deontological language have more appeal than one that focuses on costs and benefits (study 1)? When citizens make arguments to other people, do morally convicted people select deontological arguments over ones focused on consequences (study 2)? Studies 3 and 4 build out from these results, shifting the focus to attitude change. A novel implication of the perspective above is that morally convicted individuals might be notably insensitive to new information showing that their preferred policy will lead to bad consequences. Study 3 tests this possibility. Finally, study 4 examines in a more direct way how moral conviction moderates responses to deontological versus consequence-focused persuasion efforts.

STUDY 1: ARGUMENT RESONANCE

Study 1 begins to examine whether moral conviction is associated with a deontological mind-set. If it is, then political arguments grounded in cost/benefit reasoning should have less appeal to morally convicted individuals than arguments based in deontological reasoning. Thus, hypothesis 1 is that citizens with morally convicted attitudes concerning a particular policy will reject arguments that imply a need to weigh costs and benefits on that policy. Because the objective is to elucidate how individuals themselves think about an issue, I initially examine responses to arguments on respondents' own side of an issue. (There might be more complicated interactions between preexisting attitudes and arguments intended to persuade, as I discuss below in study 4.)

If it can be shown that moral conviction predicts rejecting an argument on the basis of costs and benefits, one potential concern is that moral conviction is merely serving as a proxy for some other facet of attitude intensity, such as having an extreme position on an issue or caring very much about an issue.[7] For this reason, I adopt—here and throughout—a comparative approach.[8] I compare moral conviction to three other facets of attitude intensity: attitude *extremity*, attitude *importance*, and attitude *relevance*. Attitude extremity is "the degree to which the favorability of an individual's attitude diverges from neutral" (Wegener et al. 1995, 465). Importance is "a person's perception of the amount of personal importance he or she attaches to an attitude" (467) or, stated more intuitively, caring about something. Relevance is "the extent to which people believe that a topic or attitude object holds significant consequences for some aspects of their lives" (470). See Ryan (2016) for a similar approach, as well as a

6. Some of the studies below include an additional design feature that diminishes this concern. Studies 2 and 3 are within-subject designs in which attitude measures (about multiple issues) are separated in time from a series of judgment tasks. This property makes it more difficult for participants to remember and anchor off an arbitrary initial response.

7. For overviews of the attitude intensity literature—in particular the notion that attitude intensity is a multidimensional construct—see Petty and Krosnick (1995) and Visser, Bizer, and Krosnick (2006).

8. This approach assesses whether additional attitude intensity dimensions have incremental predictive validity, above and beyond extremity (the most commonly measured dimension). I do not mean to stipulate a particular causal relationship among the various intensity dimensions, as the psychological literature is equivocal on this point.

longer discussion of conceptual distinctions between these dimensions.

Design

Data come from a survey experiment conducted by GfK Research from May 30 to June 10, 2013. GfK Research uses random-digit-dial and address-based sampling methods to construct a diverse national panel that matches well to US census benchmarks.[9] The study was funded by the National Science Foundation via Timesharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (SES-0818839). As a requirement for funding, the hypothesis and analytical approach I employ herein were registered before the instrument was fielded. There were 1,195 respondents who, in the analyses below, are weighted to be reflective of the national population.

The experiment focused on opinions about Social Security, an issue chosen to emphasize the possibility that deontological processing might arise for economic issues, not typically regarded as moral. The study started by measuring subjects' opinions about Social Security reform. They were asked, "As you may know, the Social Security Program in the United States is projected to run out of funds in 2033 if changes are not made. Some people think that, to address this problem, we should decrease the benefits that the government pays out, such as by raising the retirement age or lowering monthly payments. How about you? How much do you support cuts to Social Security benefits?"

Responses were recorded on a seven-point scale ranging from "strongly oppose" to "strongly support decreasing Social Security benefits." Once folded at the scale midpoint, these responses become a standard measure of attitude extremity. Importance and relevance were measured with standard follow ups (Wegener et al. 1995): "How important is this issue to you personally?" and "How much does the outcome of this issue directly affect you?" Moral conviction was measured with the two-item form of a battery developed by Skitka et al. (2005): subjects were asked whether their opinion is "a reflection of your core moral beliefs and convictions" and "connected to your beliefs about fundamental right and wrong." Responses to these questions were averaged ($\alpha = .92$).

After attitude characteristics were recorded, each subject read a short news clipping that presented an argument on his or her own side of the Social Security issue.[10] The clippings differed only in a few key words and phrases, such that one presented an argument that was deontological in nature and the other presented a consequence-focused argument. Whereas the deontological clipping emphasized "first principles" and "core moral responsibilities," the consequence-focused argument emphasized "costs and benefits" and a "need to carefully weigh the pros and cons." (The premise that consequences might countervail each other is antithetical to deontology.) The appendix presents all stimuli in full, as well as a manipulation check conducted on an external sample that was used to validate this instrumentation.

The dependent variable for the study was evaluations of the congressman's message. Subjects were asked, "How would you rate the quality of the ideas raised in the news clipping? Do they seem high in quality, or do they not seem that way?" Responses were placed on a five-point scale ranging from "very low in quality" to "extremely high in quality." For analysis, I scale all variables 0–1.

Results

I begin by discussing important properties of the moral conviction measure. First, both Social Security proponents and opponents vary in terms of whether they see their issue opinions as a matter of right and wrong. As the left panel in figure 1 illustrates, more Social Security proponents are at the highest levels of moral conviction, but some amount of moral conviction exists on both sides of the issue. Second, moral conviction is not redundant with attitude extremity. As the right side of figure 1 illustrates, moral conviction and extremity are correlated, but even among people with extreme Social Security attitudes, some report moral conviction, and some do not (Pearson's $r = .52$). Correlations between moral conviction and attitude importance and relevance are similarly moderate ($r = .63, .51$, respectively).

Table 1 examines how well facets of attitude intensity predict evaluations of the news clippings. Model 1 regresses (weighted ordinary least squares) quality ratings on the treatment indicator, moral conviction, and their interaction. Model 2 adds the measures of importance and relevance, as well as interactions between each of these and the treatment. As can be seen, the interaction with moral conviction is significant, but no others are. Particularly noteworthy is the null interaction with extremity—the most often-measured attitude characteristic in public opinion research. This result highlights that attitude characteristics that usually go unmeasured predict how citizens process political arguments.[11]

9. The appendix, available online, reports demographic characteristics of this and other samples.

10. Subjects with neutral Social Security opinions were randomly assigned to one side of the issue or the other.

11. A section of the appendix analyzes whether the observed relationships might be confounded by participants' political orientations—in particular their partisanship or ideology. Correlations between Social Security attitude intensity and political orientation are low, and adding political orientation to the models does not appreciably affect the results. Individual-level confounders will be a smaller concern in studies 2–4, which rely on within-subject variation in attitude intensity.

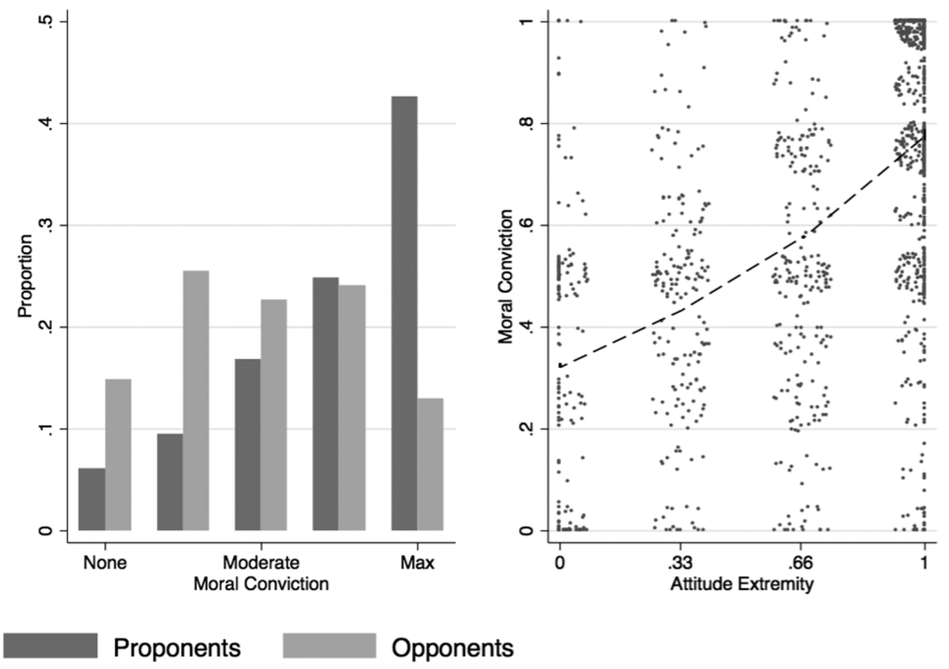

Figure 1. Properties of moral conviction measure (study 1). *Left*, proportion of Social Security proponents and opponents who hold different levels of moral conviction. *Right*, empirical disconnect between attitude extremity and moral conviction. Points are randomly jittered to better illustrate their density. The dashed line is a locally weighted scatterplot smoother.

Computing the marginal effect of the consequence-oriented frame at different levels of moral conviction illustrates that moral conviction accounts for substantial differences in how well different arguments—although attitude consistent—resonate. Extrapolating from model 2 and holding other attitude strength measures at their means, the consequence-oriented frame improves quality assessments among people at the low end of moral conviction (marginal effect $= 0.113$; SE $= 0.054$, $p < .04$) but harms assessments among people at the high end (marginal effect $= -0.116$; SE $= 0.036$, $p < .01$). Thus, the same frame appears to drive high- and low-moral conviction respondents apart by approximately 20% of the range of the dependent measure.

STUDY 2: ARGUMENT CHOICE

One limitation of the results in study 1 is that people with morally convicted attitudes might prefer the deontological argument over the consequence-oriented argument for a reason other than the argument's style. For instance, they might infer that the congressman speaking of costs and benefits is less religious, less assertive, or less likely to make Social Security an issue priority. Study 2 undertakes a separate, complementary test. Rather than focusing on how citizens respond to an argument made by an elite, it focuses on the arguments they choose to make themselves. It tests the hypothesis (H2) that citizens with morally convicted attitudes choose deontological arguments over consequence-oriented arguments when it comes to explaining and justifying their own opinions (Frimer, Tell, and Motyl 2016).

Design

Data come from a convenience sample of undergraduates collected at the University of Michigan in fall 2013. A researcher visited course sections for an introductory political science class and invited students to complete a questionnaire as part of an in-class activity. There were 171 respondents.

Subjects reported their opinions about two economic issues (collective bargaining rights and Social Security reform), two putatively social issues (gun control and the use of nuclear power), and one foreign policy issue (US intervention in Syria—a topic of intense media focus at the time). For each issue, the questionnaire measured extremity using questions adapted from Gallup public opinion surveys. Also for each issue, it measured importance, personal relevance, and moral conviction using the same approach as in study 1. (Full instrumentation appears in the appendix.)

For each issue, after measuring aspects of attitude intensity, the questionnaire asked subjects to evaluate (on a five-point scale) four arguments on their own side of the issue.[12] Two of the arguments were deontological in nature,

12. To conduct a small experiment on how moral conviction relates to perspective taking, subjects were randomly assigned (between subjects) to

Table 1. Moral Conviction Moderates Responses to Cost/Benefits Frame (Study 1)

	(1)	(2)
Consequences frame	.093*	.063
	(.041)	(.043)
Extremity (folded)	. . .	.047
	. . .	(.039)
Importance	. . .	−.018
	. . .	(.077)
Relevance	. . .	.098
	. . .	(.074)
Moral conviction	.335**	.270**
	(.037)	(.048)
Consequences frame × extremity	. . .	−.039
	. . .	(.053)
Consequences frame × importance	. . .	.162
	. . .	(.119)
Consequences frame × relevance	. . .	−.051
	. . .	(.101)
Consequences frame × moral conviction	−.194**	−.230**
	(.060)	(.083)
Constant	.308**	.261**
	(.025)	(.031)
N	1,181	1,173

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. Weighted ordinary least squares models. All variables scaled to run 0–1. Dependent variable is evaluation of the quality of the argument in the news clipping.

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed tests).

** $p < .01$.

and the other two were focused on consequences.[13] For instance, respondents who wanted to implement Social Security cuts evaluated the deontological arguments "It is wrong to give away (through taxing and spending) money that people have worked hard to earn" and "People have a fundamental obligation and responsibility to make provisions for their own retirement," as well as the consequence-focused arguments "Cutting back on Social Security has some costs, but also benefits: it will free up some money for people to invest and create jobs" and "Many Social Security benefits go to people in the middle or upper class who can get by without, and could be spent elsewhere." (All arguments appear in the appendix.) For each person on each issue, a preference for deontological arguments on that issue was constructed, defined as

$$\text{DPref}_{\text{issue}} = (\text{Eval}_{\text{deont1}} + \text{Eval}_{\text{deont2}}) - (\text{Eval}_{\text{cons1}} + \text{Eval}_{\text{cons2}}).$$

The DPref score is scaled from −1 (preference for consequentialist arguments) to 1 (preference for deontological), with a score of 0 reflecting perfect balance.

Results

Because study 2 measures moral conviction on multiple topics for each subject, it is possible to examine—in a way study 1 could not—patterns of moral conviction across issues. In table 2, I report all pairwise correlations between moral conviction on issues. The median correlation is .31, and the highest correlation is .40. Since moral conviction on any one issue is weakly predictive of moral conviction on other issues, these results further illustrate that moral conviction should be thought of with reference to specific attitude objects and not as an individual-level trait.[14]

Overall, subjects found deontological and consequentialist arguments comparably attractive. Issue by issue, the median DPref score ranges from −0.125 to 0.125. (Three of the five medians are exactly zero.) Standard deviations range from 0.231 to 0.348. Importantly, within subjects, DPref on one issue poorly predicts DPref on other issues ($\alpha = .13$). This result suggests that the preference for deontological arguments is domain specific and not simply an individual-level trait.

Hypothesis 2 proposes that morally convicted citizens will prefer deontological arguments to ones that focus on costs and benefits. To evaluate whether this is the case, and to compare moral conviction to other aspects of attitude intensity, I estimate the DPref measure as a function of the attitude intensity measures, with fixed effects for each issue, and between-subject heterogeneity modeled as random effects. As an additional check, I model between-subject heterogeneity with fixed effects.[15]

report whether each argument seemed "strong" or instead whether it would be "effective" at persuading others. Because this facet of the design is less clearly diagnostic of deontological processing, I pool across the two conditions in the observational results presented below. In the appendix, I report the experimental results thoroughly. An assurance relevant for assessing the results in table 3 is that moral conviction is associated with a preference for deontological arguments within both conditions. (The observational relationship is significant in one condition and not the other.)

13. The arguments were written to be of similar length. The deontological arguments made explicit reference to rights, duties, obligations, and prohibitions. The consequentialist arguments made reference to expected effects and, as such, included a proposition that could (at least in principle) be subjected to evidence.

14. A separate question is whether moral conviction is constrained by some unifying consideration, such as a political value (e.g., egalitarianism). Answering this question is beyond my current scope. However, generally low between-issue correlations in moral conviction are consistent with the idea the moral intuitions are fairly unconstrained, at least for most people.

15. Because they rely entirely on within-subject variance in attitude strength, the fixed effects estimates are robust to the possibility that there

Table 2. Pairwise Moral Conviction Correlations

	Study 2				
	Syria	Social Security	Gun Control	Collective Bargaining	Nuclear Energy
Syria	1.00				
Social Security	.23	1.00			
Gun control	.30	.35	1.00		
Collective bargaining	.27	.40	.36	1.00	
Nuclear energy	.32	.24	.35	.31	1.00
	Study 3				
	Invade Iran	Social Security	Gun Control	Tax the Wealthy	Nuclear Energy
Invade Iran	1.00				
Social Security	.33	1.00			
Gun control	.34	.28	1.00		
Tax the wealthy	.18	.44	.25	1.00	
Nuclear energy	.30	.28	.21	.15	1.00

Note. Pairwise correlations between moral conviction on issue X and issue Y in studies 2 and 3.

The left side of table 3 presents the results. Moral conviction is associated with a preference for deontological arguments, a relationship amounting to 5%–8% of the range of the dependent measure. The relationship is statistically significant in the random effects model ($p < .01$). It is potentially attributable to chance in the fixed effects model ($p = .08$).[16] The results for the other attitude strength measures bear some discussion. One might have conjectured that attitude extremity would be associated with a preference for the absolutist language in the deontological arguments. It is not. Attitude importance is associated, if anything, with a preference for consequence-oriented arguments. Overall, the results reveal texture in how particular facets of attitude intensity relate to argument evaluations. They underline that attitudes can be intense in ways that do not orient citizens to a deontological mode for thinking about political issues.

is an individual-level variable whose omission biases estimates of the attitude strength measures. Of course, they are also considerably less efficient than a random effects model, supposing such bias is negligible. In the appendix, I also present models in which relationships are estimated within specific issues, using only between-subject variation in attitude intensity.

16. Although the expectations for moral conviction are directional, I employ two-tailed hypothesis tests throughout. Readers wishing to contemplate a one-tailed test should divide the relevant *p*-values by two.

STUDY 3: RESPONSES TO INFORMATION ABOUT CONSEQUENCES

Study 3 begins to build out from the results above, shifting focus to political persuasion. One of the benefits of understanding how moral conviction, as a distinctive facet of attitude intensity, relates to the manner in which people think about arguments is that doing so might clarify whose political attitudes change in response to different kinds of information. Study 3 begins to assess this possibility. It focuses on the conjecture (H3) that citizens with morally convicted attitudes are notably resistant to new information suggesting that a preferred policy position will have negative consequences. This hypothesis is implied by the nature of deontological processing, which values actions directly, irrespective of consequences.

Design

Data come from a convenience sample of undergraduates at the University of Michigan collected in winter 2013 (a separate data source from study 2). There were 235 respondents.

Similar to study 2, study 3 asked subjects to contemplate five political issues. The issues, which were presented in a random order, were Social Security reform, taxes for wealthy Americans, gun control, the use of nuclear power, and US intervention in Iran. All attitude characteristics were measured in the same way as in previous studies.

Table 3. Observational Relationships in Studies 2 and 3

	Deontological Preference (Study 2)		Attitude Change (Study 3)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Extremity (folded)	.008	−.030	.168**	.168**
	(.039)	(.048)	(.029)	(.032)
Importance	−.122*	−.072	−.036	−.034
	(.049)	(.067)	(.039)	(.041)
Relevance	.041	.069	−.040	−.080*
	(.045)	(.063)	(.032)	(.036)
Moral conviction	.155**	.095	−.115**	−.168**
	(.044)	(.054)	(.034)	(.041)
Issue fixed effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Respondent controls	Random effects	Fixed effects	Random effects	Fixed effects
Constant	.043	.055	.179**	.230**
	(.030)	(.032)	(.029)	(.030)
N (subjects)	779 (171)		1,138 (232)	

Note. Clustered standard errors in parentheses. All independent variables scaled to run 0–1. For study 2, the dependent variable is preference for deontological arguments and runs −1–1, with 0 representing a perfect balance between deontological and cost/benefit arguments. For study 3, the dependent variable is movement in the direction of a hypothetical revelation designed to pull subjects away from their ex ante opinion. It ranges from −.5–1. (A value of −.5 represent a subject who had an initially neutral opinion that became extreme. A value of 0 represents no change. A value of 1 represents an opinion that was extreme in one directio, and became extreme in the opposite direction.)

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed tests).

** $p < .01$.

After aspects of attitude intensity were recorded, subjects were asked to consider new information that worked against their opinion on a given issue.[17] Each revelation was emphatically hypothetical; subjects were asked to "suppose, just for the sake of argument," that new information came to light. Then, subjects were once again presented the seven-point issue position scale and asked where they would place themselves, if the hypothetical information were true. Table 4 presents sample hypothetical revelations for the nuclear power issue. (Other issues appear in the appendix.)

The decision to use hypotheticals might be surprising, since some practitioners note that they have liabilities in survey research. I take no issue with the general wisdom, but there are reasons hypotheticals are suited to the objective here. First, hypotheticals are not constrained by reality. It is possible to entertain—and the study did—imaginary worlds where assumptions about the effects of various policies were starkly undermined. Second, hypotheticals allow no counterargument. If disconfirming information were bound by reality, citizens might question the reliability of the information they received or the credibility of the sender. But by making no pretense of being true, hypotheticals force subjects to behave in a manner that starkly reveals whether their attitudes are responsive to consequences.

The dependent variable for study 3 is opinion change in response to the hypothetical revelations, which is defined as movement (from the first administration of the extremity question to the second administration) in the direction of the nudge. Thus, subjects on the liberal side of an issue receive positive scores for change when their opinion become more conservative, and subjects on the conservative side receive positive scores when their opinions become more liberal.[18]

Results

The bottom half of table 2 replicates a result from study 2: moral conviction on any particular issue is only weakly predictive of conviction on another issue (median $r = .28$), corroborating the understanding of moral conviction as a loosely constrained factor best measured at the attitude level.

17. Perfectly neutral respondents were assigned to one issue side or the other. When perfectly neutral initial attitudes are excluded from the analysis below, no substantive results change.

18. Most change scores fall between 0 (no change) and 1 (an extreme opinion on one side followed by an extreme opinion on the opposite side). It is logically possible to receive a negative score for change. It happens if the revelation backfires: e.g., if a moderately liberal opinion becomes more liberal following the hypothetical revelation. Few change scores are negative (4.6%).

Table 4. Sample Hypothetical Revelations Used in Study 3

Presented to Nuclear Energy Proponents	Presented to Nuclear Energy Opponents
Suppose, just for the sake of argument, that the International Atomic Energy Administration, in cooperation with a well-regarded team of international researchers, determined that the likelihood of even newly constructed nuclear reactors experiencing a serious incident in a given year is surprisingly high—on the order of one in one thousand. That has not happened, but supposing it did, where would you place yourself on the scale?	Suppose, just for the sake of argument, that the International Atomic Energy Administration, in cooperation with a well-regarded team of international researchers, determined that the likelihood of newly constructed nuclear reactors experiencing a serious incident in a given year is extremely low—on the order of one in ten million. That has not happened, but supposing it did, where would you place yourself on the scale?

Table 3 presents results from study 3 in the same style as study 2. Extremity positively predicts change following a revelation. This result might be surprising, but consider that subjects whose attitudes are extreme can change more than subjects with moderate attitudes can. (A subject with a perfectly neutral attitude can only change three increments on the scale, while a subject with an extreme attitude can swing the full seven-increment range of the scale.) Aside from extremity, all the relationships are negative, but the moral conviction relationship is clearly larger than those for importance or relevance—irrespective of whether between-subject variation is modeled with fixed or random effects. These results support hypothesis 3, the idea that moral conviction identifies a style of thinking that is insensitive to information about policy consequences.

One way to get a sense of the magnitude of the association between moral conviction and resistance to change is to consider two hypothetical respondents with extreme issue opinions (extremity = 1) but who are at opposite ends of the moral conviction scale.[19] On the basis of model 4 in table 3, and holding other measures at their means, the individual with the nonmoralized opinion would be expected to moderate her opinion by 0.35 points—23% of the range of the dependent measure. The individual with the moralized attitude would moderate by 0.18 points—half as much.

STUDY 4: RESPONSES TO PERSUASION EFFORTS

Hypotheticals were used in study 3 to isolate differences in how citizens respond to information about consequences. While useful for sidestepping the problem of credibility, there are obstacles to applying the findings to persuasion in more naturalistic contexts. In particular, people seeking to engage in political persuasion face choices about what themes or considerations to emphasize. The distinction between focusing on actions versus consequences is one such choice. For instance, a US citizen who favors permissive immigration policies might discuss positive economic effects stemming from introducing new workers to an economy—a line of argumentation subject, at least in principle, to empirical evidence. Alternatively, she might argue that free movement is a fundamental human right or that wealthy nations have an inherent obligation to welcome newcomers—lines of reasoning that empirical evidence cannot falsify. There are similar divides on many political issues.

It seems plausible that moral conviction would moderate responses to arguments that focus on consequences versus those that focus on actions. However, there are two distinct ways in which it might do so. On one hand, if morally convicted individuals are committed to a particular rule, they might be highly motivated to reject arguments suggesting an alternative, antithetical rule. For this reason, they might be especially likely to reject attitude-inconsistent arguments stated in deontological terms. On the other hand, studies in psychology give reasons why the opposite pattern might arise. For instance, when contrary moral mandates are pitted directly against each other, individuals perceive a "tragic tradeoff" and begin to waver on otherwise rigid commitments (Tetlock et al. 2000). Furthermore, researchers have found that arguments are especially persuasive when the content of a message matches the functional basis of the message recipient's attitude (Petty and Wegener 1998; see also Feinberg and Willer 2015). Study 4 assesses this matching hypothesis in the context of moral psychology. The conjecture (H4) is that citizens with nonmoralized attitudes are persuaded by arguments focused on consequences, but citizens with moralized attitudes reject the same.

Design

Data come from a national sample ($N = 414$) of respondents collected from a contract with Survey Sampling In-

19. Similar to what is seen in fig. 1, such individuals exist and are not merely an imaginary extrapolation of the model. Issue by issue, the proportion of maximally extreme respondents with moral conviction scores of 0.375 or below ranges from 8.32% (gun control) to 39.0% (nuclear energy). The proportion with scores of 0.5 or below ranges from 17.4% (taxes) to 68% (nuclear energy).

Table 5. Gun Control Arguments (Study 4)

	Presented to Liberals	Presented to Conservatives
Deontological	In a free society, citizens have a right to own firearms. The government has no right to intrude on what citizens can buy and sell from each other.	It is wrong for private citizens to own a tool whose only purpose is to kill. It is wrong for guns to be as easy to purchase as they currently are.
Consequential	Some evidence suggests that the proposals out there won't be effective, since there are already so many guns on the streets. Some evidence suggests that new regulations will be expensive, and we don't need extra costs in our current economic situation.	Some evidence suggests that a few restrictions can be implemented with small inconvenience to hobbyists. Some evidence suggests that restrictions would be an effective way to decrease violence.

Note. Social Security arguments are presented in the appendix. All consequentialist arguments were preceded with the text, "Gun control policy is a matter of balancing costs and benefits." All deontological arguments were preceded with the text, "Gun control policy is not about evidence. It's about basic notions of right and wrong."

ternational (SSI). SSI uses targeted recruitment to construct a panel of respondents that closely matches US census benchmarks for education, age, gender, geography, and income. The instrument was fielded in April 2014.

Study 4 is a randomized within-subjects design focused on two issues: Social Security reform and gun control. Each subject answered questions about both issues, and the issues were presented in random order. For each issue, subjects completed three tasks. First, they reported their attitude about the issue, using attitude intensity measures similar to previous studies. Second, they considered two brief passages arguing against their initial issue opinion. Both arguments were deontological, or both focused on consequences, as determined by a random assignment (see table 5; the appendix presents all arguments used).[20] Third, subjects reported their issue position a second time, to determine whether opinion change occurred. The random assignment of arguments (deontological vs. consequence oriented) was balanced such that if a subject evaluated deontological arguments for the Social Security issue, she evaluated consequence-oriented arguments for the gun control issue (and vice versa). As in study 3, the dependent variable is attitude change from time 1 to time 2. The dependent variable is observed twice for each subject: once for the Social Security issue and once for gun control.

Results

To analyze study 4, I scale all variables 0–1 except for the attitude change measure, which, as in study 3, is scaled from −.5 (the arguments backfire, turning a neutral preference into an extreme one) to 1 (drastic persuasion: movement from an extreme attitude on one side of the issue to an extreme attitude on the opposite side). Overall, the arguments resulted in a modest amount of persuasion. The mean level of change was 0.067 (SE = 0.009) for the gun control issue and 0.088 (SE = 0.012) for Social Security. Overall, neither consequentialist- nor deontological-style arguments were more persuasive (based on a within-subject ANOVA; $F[1, 411] = 0.09, p = .76$). The conjecture of hypothesis 4, however, is that this simple test masks individual-level heterogeneity. To assess how facets of attitude strength predict responses to arguments of different styles, I pool the issues together and regress the change measure on the attitude intensity measures, plus all attitude intensity × treatment interactions, including fixed effects for each issue. I summarize the key findings here, and present the full results in the appendix.[21]

Hypothesis 4 implies an interaction between the randomly assigned argument style (consequence-oriented frame = 1) and moral conviction. This interaction is negative and substantial ($\beta = -0.237$; SE = 0.077, $p < .01$). This result implies that subjects whose issue attitudes are morally convicted are significantly less persuaded by the consequence-oriented argument than subjects with non–morally convicted attitudes. No other argument style × attitude strength interactions were significant, corroborating the interpretation of moral conviction as a distinctive attitude characteristic whose consequences are not reducible to a more general form of attitude intensity. Figure 2 plots the marginal effect of the consequence-oriented frame, as dependent on moral conviction (with other measures held at their means). It is clear that the null average effect described above obscures considerable het-

20. I presented two same-style arguments, rather than just one, to increase the intensity of the treatment and to average over idiosyncrasies attributable to any particular argument.

21. The appendix presents models in which between-subject heterogeneity is modeled with both fixed and random effects. The results are quite similar. Here, I discuss the more conservative fixed effects model.

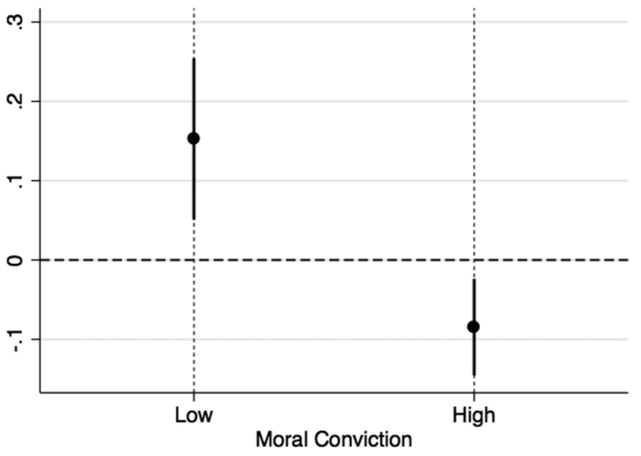

Figure 2. Marginal effect of consequence arguments (relative to deontological arguments), depending on moral conviction (study 4). Positive values represent greater persuasion. Other measures are held at their means. Bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Full regression models reported in the appendix.

erogeneity. Respondents low in moral conviction are persuaded by the consequence-oriented arguments, moving 10% of the range of the dependent variable (marginal effect = 0.153; SE = 0.052, $p < .01$). In contrast, respondents high in moral conviction respond favorably to the deontological argument (marginal effect = −0.085; SE = 0.031, $p < .01$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Why is it so hard to change minds about political issues? Here, drawing on interdisciplinary research, I suggest one reason is that political symbols can engage a mental mode of processing in which actions are evaluated in a way detached from consequences. The studies above work in tandem to ground this pattern in a measurement approach and then integrate it into the study of political persuasion. I find that citizens imbue issue attitudes with differing degrees of moral conviction and that moral conviction corresponds to a preference for arguments cast in deontological terms (studies 1 and 2). Moreover, I find that morally convicted issue attitudes are insensitive to new information about policy effects (study 3) and lead citizens to reject arguments grounded in cost/benefit reasoning (study 4).

Of course this research comes with some limitations. Political persuasion is a complex process determined by many situational and dispositional factors. Here, I have focused on how dimensions of attitude strength, as applied to political issues, relate to the style in which people tend to process related political arguments. I have put aside short-term situational forces that might bear on patterns of persuasion, although it is possible that these could interrupt or amplify the patterns I examine here (e.g., Clifford et al. 2015). I have also not been able to examine what causes political symbols to become imbued with moral conviction. This is a separate topic, albeit one on which researchers are making progress (Wisneski and Skitka 2017).

Other published articles discuss moral conviction as it relates to research questions in psychology (e.g., Skitka et al. 2015). In this concluding section, I highlight two takeaways for public opinion researchers, who place greater emphasis on understanding psychological relationships in the context of the broader political system. First, this research suggests a new way to approach the study of issue framing. It is evident that some issue frames resonate with citizens better than others (Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997). However, it is difficult to characterize which ones and why.[22] Taber et al. (2009) tested implications of argument length, complexity, and credibility but found no effects along these lines. Chong and Druckman suggest that a frame is strong to the extent its ideas are characterized by "quality" and "logic," although this definition provides limited guidance because "these factors will depend on individual perceptions of what is compelling" (2007, 640).[23] The studies above push ahead on this question, entertaining the idea that facets of attitude intensity help characterize what kinds of arguments are perceived as compelling and to whom.

The notion that frames are not inherently strong or weak, but strong or weak for different people, might be especially relevant to understanding moral considerations in politics. Views differ about whether it is wise to invoke moral considerations in persuasive appeals. Some studies suggest that arguments that appeal to moral concerns are effective (Feinberg and Willer 2015). Others, perhaps working from the premise that moral divides are difficult to bridge, suggest that it is best to focus on reasoning about consequences (see the instrumentation within Akhtar, Paunesku, and Tormala [2013] and Petty, Harkins, and Williams [1980]). The results herein help to reconcile these perspectives. I find evidence that citizens respond differently to consequence-oriented persuasion, as a function of the processing style they bring to a particular issue.

Second, the studies above, in tandem with other recent ones (Hillygus and Shields 2008; Holbrook et al. 2005; Ryan 2014, 2016), help to revitalize attitude strength as a paradigm via which to understand how mass opinions bear on political

22. In a review, Druckman writes, "Why are some frames perceived as strong and others as weak? Even the large persuasion literature offers scant insight" (2010, 294).

23. As such, a common practice in framing studies is simply to measure average perceived frame strength directly in pretests, thereby evincing agnosticism about why frames are stronger or weaker (e.g., Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013).

outcomes. Prominent public opinion scholars once saw a nuanced understanding of attitude intensity as a critical focus for public opinion research. It promised to advance the discipline from a paradigm in which opinions were treated in an undifferentiated way to one in which researchers could better characterize which opinions—perhaps because they are more resistant to persuasion or more likely to motivate political action—matter when left to compete in the context of the political system (Blumer 1948; Converse 1987, esp. S19–S21; Key 1961, esp. 10–14). When public opinion researchers have tested whether the various facets of attitude strength have distinct consequences, they have found that they do. Still, by far the most common practice in public opinion research is to assume attitude strength to be a unidimensional construct, with different measures of strength being more or less interchangeable (Miller and Peterson 2004, for a review). This is a shortcoming, and investigators will be well served to give attitude strength research a fresh look.

Public opinion scholars have long intuited that citizens' sense of morality is a foundation of citizens' political opinions and motivations (Wilson 1997). The investigations herein affirm morality as an important factor in how people think about issues and arguments, while also underlining the diversity and disorganized character of the "moral sense." Deepening scientific understanding of this animating force in politics is a promising avenue for future work.

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