



Winter 2017

Framing and Moral Motives: The Interaction Between Moral Foundations and Political Identity in Predicting Motives

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Framing and Moral Motives: The Interaction Between Moral Foundations
and Political Identity
in Predicting Motives

By

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Accepted in Partial Completion
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

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MASTER'S THESIS

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Joshua Thompson
February 17, 2017

Framing and Moral Motives: The Interaction Between Moral Foundations and Political
Identity
in Predicting Motives

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

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February, 2017

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Abstract

Current research suggests that there are differences in the moral foundations of liberals and conservatives. Liberals' moral foundations tend to focus on issues of fairness, equality, and social justice while conservatives' focus on issues of authority, purity, and social order. Framing political issues in the context of moral foundations such as harm or purity can cause a change in political attitudes. The current study examines whether framing issues in the context of harm or purity affects approach (social justice, self-reliance) and avoidance (social order, self-restraint) moral motives, and examines the role of high activation negative emotions in this process. It was expected that framing issues using the harm foundation, would increase social justice motives, especially among conservatives. Results showed that when political issues were framed to induce feelings of causing or avoiding harm, conservatives showed more motivation toward social justice concerns. In contrast, framing had no effect on the social justice motives of liberals. High activation negative emotions played no role in this relationship. Also, framing had no effect on self-reliance, social order, or self-restraint motives among conservatives or liberals. These results suggest that conservatives' social justice motives can be increased by framing political issues to induce feelings of causing or avoiding harm. This could be a consideration when developing political communication strategies to promote social justice motives.

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Framing and Moral Motives: The Interaction Between Moral Foundations and Ideology in Predicting Motives

Morality sometimes enters into political decisions. This reality has become a focus of study in political psychology. The 2004 reelection campaign of President George W. Bush centered on the opposition of marriage equality for the LGBT community. Some would argue that this strategy of emphasizing this moral issues increased conservative turnout, giving the President a second term (Graeber, 2011; Janoff-Bulman, Sheikh, & Baldacci, 2008). There is currently a renewed focus on the so-called “culture wars” in American politics. The issues of gender and LGBT equality were campaign issues in the 2016 election. Additionally, since 2010, 32 states have enacted laws restricting abortion. (Reid, 2012). Such morality-linked political controversies have led to a new interest in the ways in which morality drives political attitudes. In the 2016 election cycle, candidates once again debated the moral issues of social and economic inequality, abortion, gender, and marriage equality.

Research on morality and political behavior has traditionally focused on understanding voting behavior. Recently, there has been a shift in focus from voting behavior to better understanding political attitudes. Current research in the field seeks to understand the extent to which framing political issues in the context of morality can lead to a shift in political attitudes. The purpose of this study is to expand on existing research on framing, morality, and political attitudes by examining whether framing political issues in the context of morality can affect moral motivation. Specifically, this study tests whether social justice motives can be primed by altering the moral framing of a political issue and the role of political identity in this process.

What is Morality?

Though morality has been a topic of discussion since the time of ancient philosophers, David Hume (1738/1978) put forth one of the first treatises discussing the origins and functions of moral sense and reasoning. Hume's moral philosophy was based on the theory of mind. Theory of mind describes an individual's ability to interpret other's feelings, beliefs, and motives in relation to the self. Hume applied this philosophy to ethics, producing four ethical theses: 1. Reason alone cannot act as a motive. Reason is a "slave of the passions". 2. Moral reasoning is not the result of reason. 3. Moral reasoning is a result of moral sentiments. 4. Some virtues and vices are innate while others, such as social justice and equality, are the result of culture (Cohon, 2010). Contemporary moral theorists have used Hume's moral philosophy to develop a number of perspectives on morality.

Though there are a number of current theories of morality, they tend to take one of three perspectives. One perspective argues that moral sense is innate and universal. According to this approach, known as moral sense theory, moral sense can be defined as a "code of values and customs which informs social conduct" (Marazzeti, et.al, 2013, p.3). Morality is understood as the result of a deliberative, cognitive process and that it is innate, universal, and unchangeable. Moral rules regarding fairness, not causing harm to others, and cultural purity are seen as innate and are understood to exist across all cultures. For example, children automatically know at an early age that hitting another will cause bodily harm and that they should avoid such behavior (Turiel, 1983). There is a contradiction in this perspective. How can morality be both deliberative and innate? This contradiction is addressed in later theories.

A second perspective takes into account the role of acculturation and socialization in the development of moral sense. This perspective argues that morality is developed throughout childhood as the result of social learning and is distinct from other forms of social knowledge. Individuals develop basic rules regarding fairness, welfare, and the rights of others throughout early childhood. The knowledge of the rules will become stable by late adolescence (Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1969; Turiel, 1983).

A third perspective takes into account the role of emotion in moral reasoning. This perspective argues that moral reasoning, motives, and judgements result primarily from emotions. Judgments regarding moral issues are often the result of emotional reactions to a behavior or situation. When confronting a behavior that may be perceived as taboo, individuals may first have an emotional reaction to the behavior. From that emotional response they make a judgment and then rationalize their judgment. These taboos are typically learned as the result of socialization and are based on cultural norms. For example, an individual may notice a same-sex couple expressing affection in public. In certain cultures this could be considered a taboo behavior. A negative emotional reaction to this violation could lead to a negative moral judgement based on an emotional reaction (Bloom, 2014; Hume, 1739/1978; Haidt, 2001). Haidt (2012) refers to this process as moral dumbfounding. Specifically, violations of harmless taboos will often be judged as wrong due to the emotions they elicit, with cognitive appraisal occurring at the end of the process. He uses the phrase “I know it’s wrong but I don’t know why” to describe this phenomenon (Haidt, 2012). Overall, this perspective argues that emotional reactions precede moral judgments.

The three approaches mentioned above do conflict and can be better explained through the theory of moral sense. The theory of moral sense combines these previous approaches and also seeks to address the earlier contradiction of morality being both deliberative and innate. As stated earlier, moral sense drives social conduct and can be thought of as either “descriptive” or “normative”. Descriptive morality includes the codes established by society that help to establish rules for what is right and what is wrong. While this code is guided by social norms and is meant to prevent and regulate rules regarding the harm of others, its primary focus is the acceptance of authority and respect for group rules. In other words, descriptive morality guides individuals by providing the rules needed to ensure cohesion of social groups. Normative morality, on the other hand, considers the codes followed by all individuals despite any formal rules set by society or the group. This code of morality is considered universal and specifically focuses on fairness and the prevention of harm of others. There is some overlap between descriptive and normative morality and the three previously mentioned approaches. Normative morality, specifically, is consistent with the idea that morality is innate and universal. Moral sense also takes into account the role emotions play in morality. Specifically, descriptions of moral sense suggest that because of the ability to experience a wide range of emotions, humans have developed of a sense of morality that does not appear to be present in other animal species (Marazziti, et. al, 2013). In general, moral sense describes the extent to which morality can be both innate and learned and takes into account the role of emotions in moral judgments.

Haidt and Graham (2007) applied these previous theories in moral psychology to develop Moral Foundations Theory (MFT). Like other perspectives, MFT describes

moral intuitions as innate dispositions that are derived from cultural practices and intuitions. All humans are born with basic intuitions but they are further developed and changed through childhood dependent on cultural socialization. For example, Haidt and Graham argue that all humans innately attempt to avoid causing physical harm to others but the rules for avoiding such harm are learned. Humans are born with a sense of right and wrong, but the rules for how we should treat others are learned throughout the course of development.

Also taking other theories into account, MFT suggests that these dispositions are malleable and can change depending on context. Through an examination of psychological, anthropological, and evolutionary literature Haidt and Graham categorized morality into five foundations which fall within two domains. The individualizing foundations include the facets of fairness/reciprocity and harm/care. For simplicity, these will be referred to as fairness and harm. These individualizing foundations state that moral choices are the result of a careful examination of the rights of individuals and the amount of harm that will come to those individuals. When these ethics are taken into consideration individuals will often make a choice that results in the least amount of harm to the fewest individuals (Gilligan, 1982; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Kohlberg, 1969). In contrast to the individualizing foundations, the binding foundations are characterized by group loyalty. The binding foundation includes the facets of ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity. For simplicity, these will be referred to as ingroup, authority, and purity. Haidt and Graham argue that it is the binding foundations, in particular, that promote the strength of identification and unity with social groups. For example, an individual who has binding moral foundations will likely show a strong

preference for ingroup membership, respect for authority, and the maintenance of traditional values (Haidt & Graham, 2007). In general, MFT seeks to consolidate previous perspectives on morality into one framework. This framework takes into account both the innate and malleable nature of morality while also acknowledging the role of emotion in the process of moral judgments.

Emotion, Moral Motives, and Political Triggers

A common thread in most theories of morality is that of the role of emotions in moral reasoning. Russell (1980) described a circumplex model of emotion. This model suggests that emotions are either pleasant or unpleasant, can be activating or deactivating, and are the result of a cognitive processing of neural stimuli. It is these stimuli that lead to the motivation to act (Posner, Russell, and Peterson, 2005; Russell, 1980). When considering morality, emotions typically discussed include disgust, anger, and fear. Disgust is often linked with the purity while anger and fear are linked with the authority/respect and ingroup binding foundations (Bloom, 2014). These are all consistent with the activating emotions described in the circumplex model. Though the circumplex model also includes positive emotions, negative emotions are the focus of the current study. This approach was taken because most research on moral reasoning and the emotions associated with morality centers on negative emotions.

Bloom (2014) investigated the role of emotion in moral judgments in an experimental setting. She argued that moral judgments consist of both an emotional and a cognitive component. Her research on moral emotions examines whether emotion and cognition are complimentary processes in the formation of moral judgments. To investigate this hypothesis, she first exposed participants to a narrative that was meant to

induce feelings of harm or disgust. Next, participants indicated support for self- or other-directed negative emotions toward same-sex marriage. Specifically, consistent with the circumplex model, she considered whether inductions of high activation negative emotions would affect moral judgments. Results showed that participants primed with feelings of harm and disgust expressed both self- and other-directed negative emotions and made more harsh moral judgements (Bloom, 2014).

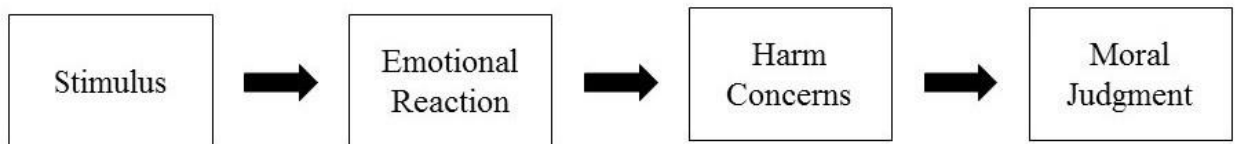
When examining the influence of emotions on morality, Haidt and Greene (2002) describe the theory of the emotionalist (Haidt & Greene, 2002). This theory states that moral judgment is more influenced by emotion than by cognitive reasoning. Haidt (2001) further describes the emotions that may affect moral reasoning, including both high activation emotions, such as anger and disgust, and low activation emotions, such as guilt and shame (Haidt, 2001; Posner, Russell, and Peterson, 2005; Russell, 1980). Political issues can often activate moral motives by inducing an emotional response. Haidt (2012) discusses the ways in which emotion and morality can work as political triggers. In this case, political issues may produce moral emotions which will then trigger moral motives. For example, a political advertisement showing an individual preparing to kill an animal may cause negative emotions, such as frustration, sadness, disgust, and anger, which would arouse concerns over harm. This process would influence moral judgment and is illustrated in Figure 1. This emotional reaction could induce the motivation for an individual to take political action or become involved with an animal rights movement. Such political action may lead to an intrinsic reward.

The purity foundation is often triggered by thoughts of religion and bodily contamination. The purity foundation may be activated in many ways and triggers can

vary greatly across cultures. This foundation can be tied to views toward immigration as well as religious liberty. Immigration, specifically, can act as a trigger because it is often seen as a threat to the purity of society and traditional social norms. For example, during his campaign Republican President-elect Donald Trump described undocumented, Latino immigrants as rapists, drug dealers, and murderers who are destroying American society (Lee, 2015). This narrative, some argue, has been a driving force behind his support with many white Americans (Haidt, 2012). Other triggers may be advertisements regarding wounded warriors, global famine, and children in poverty. Haidt argues that because both individualizing and binding foundations will produce moral emotions they can all serve as political triggers (Haidt, 2001; Haidt, 2012; Haidt & Greene, 2002).

Figure 1:

Moral Judgement Process



Approach and Avoidance Moral Motives

The theory that inducing emotions will affect an individual's moral sense suggests that emotional responses can lead to the motivation for political involvement. Using political advertisements appealing to moral sense will lead to an emotional response that will drive moral judgments. The strength of these moral judgments can then determine involvement. Janoff-Bulman and colleagues (2008) describe the distinction between approach-avoidance motivations in morality. They describe four specific motives, two of which could be considered approach motives and two of which could be considered avoidance motives. Social justice is the first approach-based motive and involves the

advancement of others and the social group by promoting equality and fairness for all members. Self-reliance, the second approach-based motive, involves providing for the self. Self-reliance is seen as benefiting the social group by reducing each individual's burden on the group. These are considered the approach motives because they focus on the activation of the motivation to help oneself and others. Both self-reliance and social justice motives are sensitive to intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. The behavioral activation system of motivation is activated when individuals have a drive to approach behaviors when those behaviors will result in a reward (Hopko, et al., 2004). For example, individuals are likely to exhibit approach behaviors when a monetary or emotional reward is involved. This is especially true since the reward may result in alleviating negative emotions. Feelings of frustration, annoyance, and anger may be reduced when behaviors result in a reward (Hopko, et al., 2004).

In contrast to the behavioral activation system, the behavioral inhibition system of motivation is activated when individuals have a drive to avoid behaviors when those behaviors will result in punishment. Self-restraint, the first avoidance-based motive, focuses on avoiding negative outcomes. The self-restraint motive is best understood in terms of self-protection and involves avoiding behaviors that may have a negative impact one's life. Social order is the second avoidance-based motive and involves resisting threats to the social group and group cohesion. Desire for social order promotes adherence to traditional values and norms and may have a negative impact on the group. Consistent with the theory of the behavior inhibition system, avoidance motives involve the inhibition motivations that are sensitive to punishment. This sensitivity to punishment also leads to the avoidance of negative emotions. Receiving punishment may result in

high activation emotions such as fear, anxiety, frustration, and stress. Avoiding punishment may alleviate these emotions (Hopko, et al., 2004; Janoff-Bulman et al., 2008).

In the case of moral motives, helping others may provide an emotional reward that could evoke more approach behaviors. In contrast, deviating from social norms results in punishment which could lead to more avoidance behaviors. This approach-avoidance distinction is consistent with Haidt and colleagues' theory on the five moral foundations. Specifically, approach motives are most closely related to the individualizing foundations because these foundations include issues of social justice, harm, and fairness. Individuals may approach behaviors that lead to fairness and justice while avoiding behaviors that would cause harm to others. The motivation to act on this foundation can promote intrinsic rewards. Similarly, avoidance motives may be activated by the binding foundations. These foundations include issues of group affiliation, submission to authority, and adherence to traditional social norms. The motivation act on these foundations can be driven by the desire to avoid social punishment.

The current study focuses on the harm foundation and social justice motives. The harm foundation was chosen due to the relationship with social justice motives. Framing the political issues in the context of harm was expected to act as a positive trigger to induce social justice motives. The purity statements were also expected to offer a positive view of issues, but were not expected to affect either approach or avoidance moral motives. This is expected because the purity statements were positively framed. For example, purity immigration statements spoke of immigrants' lives being sacred while a negative statement would refer to immigrants as polluting American culture. Were they

framed negatively, they would be expected to have an effect such as increasing avoidance motives. Rather, the purity statements were expected to support previous research and served as the control condition for comparison.

Morality and Political Ideology

The current study also examines whether there are differences in moral foundations and motivations between individuals with liberal and conservative identities. Based on existing research examining the relationship between morality and political ideology, it is expected that liberals and conservatives will have different moral foundations and motivations. Several researchers have examined the relationships among moral foundations, moral motives, and political ideology. In particular, the role of liberal-conservative ideology has been examined in the context of the Western political structure.

This role has been examined in the context of both moral foundations and motivations. Graham, Haidt and Nosek (2009) examined the relationship between moral foundations and political ideology in two studies. Study one suggested that liberals and conservatives differed in which moral foundation they would consider to be relevant for moral judgments. Conservatives found issues relevant to the binding foundations, such as group cohesion and traditional values to be especially concerning, while participants across the political spectrum found issues relevant to the individualizing foundations, such as fairness and social justice, to be relevant to moral judgments (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009). Study two suggested that liberals were more concerned with issues relevant to harm and fairness, while conservatives were more concerned with authority, purity, and benefits for the ingroup. Further, liberals were more likely to value the

individualizing foundations over the binding foundations, while conservatives valued both foundations somewhat equally (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009).

In the context of the current political discourse, liberals may be more likely to reject trade-offs involving marriage equality in the interest of social equality despite the threat to traditional values. Conservatives, on the other hand, may be more likely to accept trade-offs involving undocumented immigrants in the interest of fairness and harm but not in the interest tradition, social order, and the purity of society. Together, the results of all three of Graham, Haidt, and Nosek's studies suggest that liberals and conservatives act on different sets of moral foundations. Overall, liberals make a large distinction between individualizing foundations and binding foundations while conservative moral priorities appear to be somewhat consistent across the two types of foundations.

Janoff-Bulman and colleagues (2008) further examined the relationship between political ideology and morality. They found that conservatives were more likely to be motivated by concerns of self-restraint and social order while liberals were more likely to be motivated by concerns of social justice. They also found that liberals and conservatives were equally likely to be motivated by self-reliance concerns (Janoff-Bulman et al., 2008).

Overall, results show differences between liberals and conservatives when it comes to both moral foundations and moral motives. Liberals tend to emphasize individualizing foundations and approach motives. This pattern is consistent with prior research showing that liberals are more concerned with issues involving social justice, equality, and mutual benefit. In contrast, conservatives tend to emphasize binding

foundations of authority, ingroup, and purity and to endorse avoidant motives. However, other research suggests that conservatives show no differences between the individualizing and binding foundations (Graham, 2012; Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Haidt, 2001; Haidt & Graham, 2008; Janoff-Bulman et al., 2008). These results show a slight contradiction. Conservatives are likely to emphasize both individualizing and binding foundations. However, they are less inclined to be motivated by social justice concerns. Given that social justice motives are closely related to the individualizing foundations, it seems possible to induce motivation toward social justice concerns by framing political issues in the context of the individualizing foundations. Specifically, framing political issues in the context of the harm foundation may induce the motivation toward social justice concerns.

Framing Political Issues

Much attention has been given to the effects of framing on political communication. The framing effect describes the ways in which the presentation of a persuasive argument can have an effect on behavior and attitudes. Iyengar (1991) described two types of political framing based on theory and empirical research. Thematic frames focus on the broad context of an issue and are more likely to lead the receiver to apply situational attributions. In contrast, episodic frames focus on a specific individual instance that represents the issue and lead the receiver to apply dispositional attributions. For example, a thematic frame would state that poverty is the result of low wages and corporate greed while an episodic frame would state that poverty is the fault of the individual (Iyengar, 1991; Nelson, 1997). Brewer and Gross (2005) argue that because thematic frames present cues such as facts, statistics, and the broader context of

the issue presented, they rely less on emotional cues and more on the audience's sense of reason. Episodic frames, however, may provide cues in stories meant to induce emotional responses and emphasize the human interest aspects of an issue (Brewer & Gross, 2005; Cacioppo & Petty, 1982; Iyengar, 1991). Gross (2008) examined emotional responses and attitude change following exposure to episodic and thematic frames. Participants' attitudes toward mandatory minimum sentencing were measured prior to exposure to one of two vignettes: an episodic or a thematic frame. The episodic frame told a personal story about the effects of mandatory minimum sentencing while the thematic frame gave statistics related to mass incarceration. Episodic frames led to a more negative emotional response and elicited more attitude change than the thematic frame (Brewer & Gross, 2005; Gross, 2008). This showed that framing political issues in a way that presents a personal story that leads to an emotional response and promotes attitude change.

Day and colleagues (2014) expanded on the idea of episodic framing by examining whether they influence political attitudes. The authors argued that political attitudes are often grounded in beliefs about what is right and wrong, and suggested that Haidt's typology of moral foundations can be used to understand the attitudes of both liberals and conservatives. Specifically, they examined whether framing political issues in the context of the five moral foundations (fairness, harm, authority, ingroup, purity) would influence political attitudes. The issues were presented without specific facts or figures. Rather, consistent with episodic framing, the issues were presented in a single statement meant to be personally relatable to the reader. This theory was tested by first measuring participants' attitudes toward five political issues and then presenting them with five frames of both liberal and conservative political issues. Attitudes shifted after

reading the frames, specifically when both liberals and conservatives received pro-attitudinal frames (regardless of the type of moral framing) their attitudes toward the issues were strengthened. However, when conservatives were presented with counter-attitudinal moral frames their attitudes were likely to become more liberal. In other words, when conservatives were presented with liberal political issues their attitudes became more liberal (Day, Fiske, Downing, & Trail, 2014). These results offer insight into the power of morality in influencing political attitudes.

Framing and Moral Motives

The purpose of this study is to examine whether framing political issues in the context of the MFT harm foundation will cause a change in the social justice motives, especially among conservatives. It is expected that, in comparison to liberals, the social justice motives of conservatives will be affected by political issues framed with a focus on avoiding harm to others. This hypothesis is consistent with research suggesting that the behavioral activation system facilitates engagement in reward-seeking behaviors in an effort to reduce negative emotions. The purity foundation will be used as the comparison condition as it is not expected to affect social justice motives. Specifically, it is expected that the purity frames will support prior results showing that liberals are motivated by social justice while conservatives are not. Additionally, the current study examines whether high-activation negative emotions mediate the relationship between harm framing and social justice motives.

The hypotheses are:

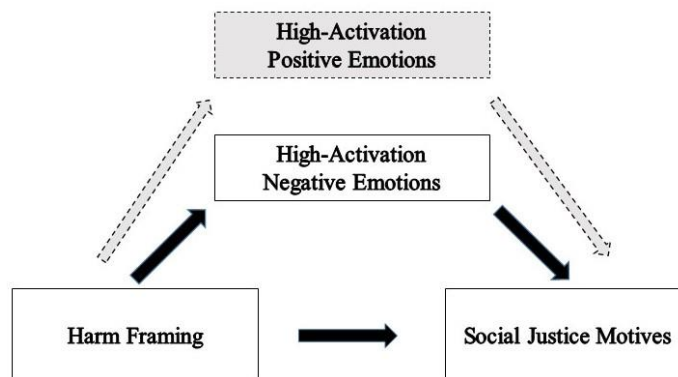
H1: In contrast to liberals, when political issues are framed to induce feelings of harm, conservatives will be more motivated by concerns of social justice than when issues are framed to induce feelings of purity.

H2: When political issues are framed to induce feelings of harm, both liberals and conservatives will be more motivated by concerns of social justice than when framed to induce feelings of purity.

H3: When political issues are framed to induce feelings of harm, both liberals and conservatives will be motivated by concerns of social justice and negative high activation emotions will mediate the relationship. This expected relationship is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2:

Proposed Mediation Effect of High-Activation Negative Emotions on the Relationship Between Harm Framing and Social Justice Motives



Note: Though not the theoretical focus of this study, high-activation positive emotions, self-reliance, social order, and self-restraint will also be examined and tested in this mediation model.

Method

Participants

For this study, 355 United States citizens (60.3% female) were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (M Turk). The average age of participants was 37 ($M = 36.56$, $SD = 11.23$). About 67% of participants reported a liberal political identity while 33% reported being conservative. Demographics for each condition are shown in Table 1. The purpose of recruiting through M Turk was to obtain a sample that includes a wide range of ages and political views. They were compensated at the rate of \$.75 for their 10 minutes of participation.

Table 1

Demographics by Condition

Condition (<i>N</i>)	Male <i>N</i>	Female <i>N</i>	Age <i>M (SD)</i>	Liberal <i>N</i>	Conservative <i>N</i>
Harm (<i>N</i> = 161)	49	111	36.34 (11.59)	110	51
Purity (<i>N</i> = 174)	81	91	36.77 (10.92)	113	60

Procedure, Design, Stimuli, and Measures

The design of this study was a 2 (Moral Foundation) x 2 (Political Identity) between subjects factorial design with the DVs of social justice, self-reliance, self-restraint, and social order motives as well as negative high activation emotions. After enrolling in the study through M Turk, participants were provided with the survey link and asked to complete an online study administered through the Qualtrics survey platform. Participants completed this study on their own time and in the location of their choosing.

To begin the study participants read an informed consent agreement. Upon agreeing to the terms outlined in the informed consent statement, participants were directed to begin the survey by clicking the arrow at the bottom of the page. Upon completing the study, participants were presented with a debriefing statement and thanked for their time.

Moral Foundations Priming Manipulation. First, participants were randomly assigned to either the harm or purity moral foundation priming condition. Participants in both conditions were presented with five political statements on the topics of immigration, environment, economic market, social programs, and education. The statements were used in Day and colleagues' (2014) framing study. All of the primes chosen included statements framed in a positive manner. Each frame presented a political issue stated in the context of the harm or purity dimensions of moral foundations. These statements were designed to serve as emotional moral triggers for the harm and the purity foundations. Participants read each of the five statements. After reading each statement, participants were asked to write two or three supporting sentences. The purpose of this method of priming is to first expose the participants to five political issues and then to lead them to consider the issues further and in depth.

The directions for the prompts stated: *“Instructions: Your task is to help create materials for future research on people’s opinions of current topics. First, you are asked to provide good arguments that support positions on 5 current topics. Some positions may be easier or more difficult to create supporting points for than others. We will check your work so please try your best. We appreciate your help to create these materials for future academic research.”*

Please write 2 or 3 points that support the positions below in the space provided. For example, provide statements about the benefits of this position or reasons that support this position. The box will expand to allow for your statements.”

After reading the directions, participants were presented with the statements.

Participants assigned to the harm prompt read the following statements:

Immigration: *All people, including immigrants, deserve to be protected from harm.*

Environment: *We must care for the earth.*

Economic Market: *We must keep the free market from hurting everyday people.*

Social Programs: *Even poor people need society to care for them.*

Education: *We must care for our children by providing them all with a high quality education.*

Participants assigned to the purity prompt read the following primes:

Immigration: *Immigrants' lives are sacred, just like every other human.*

Environment: *We must keep the earth pure.*

Market: *We have to clean up the dirtied economic market.*

Social Programs: *Every human life is sacred, no matter how much money they make.*

Education: *High quality public education cultivates our most sacred asset: our children.*

Manipulation check. As part of the manipulation, participants were first asked to read five statements and write two to three supporting points for those statements.

Participants could not move forward with the survey without completing this task.

Exclusion criteria for this task were determined a priori. Responses were examined to determine whether the written responses corresponded with the statements. Participants whose written responses were inconsistent with the statements were eliminated from the final analyses. As a result, 19 participants were excluded and 335 participants were included in the final analyses. Examples of excluded participants' responses included:

Immigration: No

Environment: Who cares.

Market: It's corrupt.

Social Programs: Lazy people.

Education: Who needs is.

Measure of High-Activation Negative Affect (Posner, Russell, and Peterson, 2005; Russell, 1980) Next, participants completed a survey based on the circumplex model of affect. The purpose of this survey is to measure the extent to which the priming exercise induced high-activation negative emotions. Participants were presented with instructions stating: *“This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate the extent to which the statements you read caused you to feel these emotions using the following scale:”* They were presented with eight high-activation negative emotions, including tense, stressed, frustrated, angry, and asked to rate the extent to which each word represents their feelings toward the statements using a Likert scale of 1 (*very slightly or not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*). Scores were totaled and an average for each participant was calculated with a higher score indicating a more negative response. In order to account for missing data, an average score was computed

allowing for the inclusion of participants who responded to at least seven of the eight items in this measure. This resulted in no missing cases in the final analyses. Descriptive statistics for this measure are presented in Table 1. Reliability for this measure was strong with a Cronbach's α of .86. See *Appendix A* for the full measure.

Moral Motives Scale (MMS) (Janoff-Bulman, Manning, & Sheikh, 2006). Next, participants completed a 20-item measure of approach and avoidance moral motives. Each subscale contained five items. Self-reliance (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$) and social justice (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$) represented approach motives. An example of a self-reliance item is "*I'm willing to put the necessary time and effort into providing for my own well-being and success.*" An example of a social justice item is "*We should all be responsible for improving the welfare of others beyond our immediate circle of friends and family.*" Self-restraint (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$) and social order (Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$) represented avoidance motives. An example of a self-restraint item is "*It's particularly important to me to demonstrate personal control in the face of temptation.*" An example of a social order item is "*Giving people the freedom to choose the way they live threatens the societal bonds that hold us together.*" Participants rated the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement using a 7-point Likert-type scale of 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*). An average score was calculated for each subscale. A higher score in each subscale indicated that the individual is likely to be currently experiencing that motive. In order to account for missing data, an average score for each subdomain was computed allowing for the inclusion of participants who responded to at least four of the five items in this measure. This resulted in no missing cases in the self-restraint, social order, and self-reliance subdomains. However, one case was eliminated from the social

justice domain. Descriptive statistics for each subscale in this measure are presented in Table 1. See *Appendix B* for the full measure.

Political Identity. Next, participants were asked to report whether they would consider themselves to be liberal, conservative, moderate, or if they didn't know. If participants choose moderate or don't know they were directed to the statement: "*If you had to choose one or the other, would you consider yourself to be:*" and forced to choose either liberal or conservative. Participants were asked to self-identify as either liberal, conservative, moderate, or not sure. Those who responded as moderate or not sure were directed to an item that forced them to choose either liberal or conservative. As a result, a total of 97 participants were directed to the forced-choice item. Sixty-eight of the participants chose liberal while 29 chose conservative. No data were eliminated due to this process.

Demographic information. In addition, participants were asked to provide the following demographic information: age, gender, religious denomination (if applicable), and state of residence.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Measured Variables

Measured Variable	N	Minimum Value	Maximum Value	Mean	Standard Deviation
Social Justice	334	1.00	7.00	5.15	1.31
Self-Reliance	335	2.00	7.00	6.00	0.83
Self-Restraint	335	1.00	7.00	5.35	1.04
Social Order	335	1.00	7.00	3.09	1.34
High-Activation Negative Emotions	335	1.00	5.00	1.98	0.82

Results

Data Preparation

Violations of Assumptions. Prior to analyses, the data were examined to determine whether there were any serious violations of assumptions that should be met. With the exception of the measure of high-activation negative emotions, all data were normally distributed with no outliers. The data for high activation negative emotions showed an extreme positive skew. Although natural logarithmic transformation showed some improvement in this distribution, the data remained positively skewed. The results presented in subsequent sections were conducted both using the original metric and using the natural logarithmic transformed data. Because the results were the same, only the raw analyses are presented in this thesis

Data Analysis

Social Justice. In order to test the prediction that conservatives would be more motivated by social justice concerns when harm associations are induced than when purity concerns are induced, a 2 x 2 between-subjects ANOVA was performed. Results showed a statistically significant interaction of framing and political identity on social-justice motives, $F(1, 333) = 83.51, MSE = .911, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .202$. This interaction is illustrated in Figure 3. Simple effects indicated statistically significant effects of framing among those with a conservative identity, $F(1, 111) = 190.35, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .636$, but not those with a liberal identity, $F(1, 222) = .318, MSE = .332, p = .573, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .001$. Group means suggest that conservatives in the harm condition reported stronger social justice motives than conservatives in the purity condition, while framing did not affect social justice motives for liberals.

To test the prediction that participants would be more motivated by social justice concerns when harm associations were induced than when purity associations were induced, main effects were examined. Participants in the harm condition ($M = 5.56$, $SD = 1.02$) reported higher levels of social justice motives than those in the purity condition ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 1.43$), $F(1,333) = 96.71$, $MSE = .911$, $p < .001$, $partial \eta^2 = .227$. Cell/Marginal means and standard deviations, interactions, and main effects results are shown in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

Self-Reliance. Although no difference between conservatives' and liberals' motivation over self-reliance concerns was expected, a 2 x 2 between-subjects ANOVA was performed. Results showed no interaction between framing and political identity in predicting self-reliance motives. There was no main effect of framing or political identity on self-reliance motives. Cell/Marginal means and standard deviations, interaction, and main effects results are shown in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

Social-Order. To test the prediction that conservatives would be more motivated by social order concerns than liberals, a 2 x 2 between-subjects ANOVA was performed. Results showed no statistically significant interaction between framing and political identity in predicting social order motives. However, conservatives ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.32$) reported higher levels of social order motives than liberals ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.28$), $F(1, 333) = 28.14$, $MSE = 46.37$, $p < .001$, $partial \eta^2 = .08$. There was no main effect of framing on social-order motives. Cell/Marginal means and standard deviations, interaction, and main effects results are shown in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

Self-Restraint. To test the prediction that conservatives would be more motivated by self-restraint concerns than liberals, a 2 x 2 between-subjects ANOVA was performed.

There was no statistically significant interaction between framing and political identity on self-restraint motives. Results showed that conservatives ($M = 5.69$, $SD = 0.95$) reported higher levels of self-restraint than liberals ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.03$), $F(1, 333) = 20.377$, $MSE = 20.582$, $p < .001$, $partial \eta^2 = .058$. Cell/Marginal means and standard deviations, interaction, and main effects results are shown in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

High-Activation Negative Emotions. To test the prediction that negative high-activation emotions would mediate the relationship between harm associations and social justice motives analyses were performed using the SPSS Hayes Process Model 4. A dummy variable was computed (0 = *Harm*, 1 = *Purity*) to include the priming manipulation in regression analysis. First, correlations were computed among all variables and are shown in Table 6. Results showed a statistically significant positive correlation between harm and social justice motives, $r = .307$, $p < .01$. Consistent with the ANOVA results, those in the harm condition reported higher levels of social justice motives than in the purity condition. However, since there were no correlations between harm and high-activation negative emotions ($r = -.043$) or between high activation negative emotions and social justice ($r = .036$), no further mediation analyses were performed.

To further explore the role of high activation emotions, a 2 x 2 between-subjects ANOVA was performed. Results showed no significant interaction between framing condition and political identity in predicting an emotional reaction. Additionally, there were no significant main effects of framing condition or political identity in predicting an emotional reaction. Cell/Marginal means and standard deviations, interactions, and main effects are shown in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

Gender Differences. To examine the influence of gender on social justice motives, a 2 x 2 x 2 between-subjects ANOVA including gender as a third condition was performed. There was no statistically significant interaction, $F(1, 333) = 1.51$, $MSE = 0.92$, $p = .201$, $partial \eta^2 = .005$. Additionally, there was no statistically significant main effect of gender, $F(1,333) = .561$, $MSE = 0.92$, $partial \eta^2 = .002$.

Summary

Overall, results showed a statistically significant interaction of condition and political identity predicted social justice motives. When primed to make harm associations, conservatives reported higher levels of social justice motives than when primed with purity. However, liberals responded similarly to the harm and purity primes. Results also showed statistically significant differences in self-reliance, social justice, social order, and self-restraint motives as a function of political identity. Conservatives reported more endorsement of self-reliance, social order, and self-restraint motives than liberals. Liberals reported higher levels of social justice motives than conservatives.

Table 4

Marginal Means and Standard Deviations for Factorial Analysis

Dependent Variable	Liberal <i>M (SD)</i>	Conservative <i>M (SD)</i>	Harm <i>M (SD)</i>	Purity <i>M (SD)</i>
Social Justice	5.62 (1.01)	4.22 (1.32)	5.56 (1.02)	4.77 (1.43)
Self-Reliance	2.83 (1.28)	3.62 (1.32)	2.95 (1.41)	3.22 (1.27)
Social Order	2.83 (1.28)	3.62 (1.32)	2.95 (1.41)	3.22 (1.27)
Self-Restraint	5.17 (1.03)	5.69 (0.95)	5.42 (1.07)	5.27 (1.00)
High-Activation Negative Emotions	2.02 (0.79)	1.89 (0.86)	1.94 (0.75)	2.01 (0.88)

Table 5

Interaction and Main Effects of Condition and Political Identity on Moral Motives and High-Activation Negative Emotions

Dependent Variable	Condition			Identity			Condition*Identity		
	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	η^2
Social Justice	96.71	.000	.227	140.27	.000	.299	83.51	.000	.202
Self-Reliance	.889	.346	.003	3.18	.076	.010	.198	.657	.001
Social Order	1.41	.237	.004	28.14	.000	.079	1.86	.174	.006
Self-Restraint	1.86	.174	.006	20.38	.000	.058	.065	.799	.000
High-Activation Negative Emotions	.133	.716	.000	1.587	.209	.005	1.474	.226	.004

Note: *Sig.* = Significant at .05

Table 6

*Correlations Among Harm Framing, High-Activation Negative Emotions, and Moral**Motives*

	Social Justice	Self- Reliance	Self- Restraint	Social Order	Affect	Harm
Social Justice						
Self- Reliance	.218**					
Self- Restraint	.079	.565**				
Social Order	-.243**	-.192**	.188**			
Affect	.036	.098	-.051	.098		
Harm	-.307**	.057	.069	-.102	-.043	

Note: ** = Significant at .01 (2-tailed)

Discussion

The current study examined whether framing political issues to induce feelings of causing or avoiding harm would have an effect on social justice moral motives.

Specifically, this study examined whether framing could increase social justice motives in conservatives. This research suggested that conservatives reported stronger social justice motives when political issues were framed to induce feelings of causing or avoiding harm while liberals reported strong social justice motives regardless of framing. This supports the first hypothesis and suggests that when political issues are framed in the context of harm, conservatives were more motivated by social justice concerns than when framed in the context of purity. Further, social justice motives were induced to a greater extent by framing issues in the context of harm than by purity. Although the harm framing was effective among conservatives it was not consistent for liberals and

conservatives. Overall, liberals reported stronger social justice motives than conservatives.

Day and colleagues (2014) similarly found that political attitudes could be affected by framing. They showed that framing political issues in the context of moral foundations theory led to a change in attitudes about the issues. Specifically, conservatives' attitudes could become more liberal when political issues were framed in the context of harm, fairness, authority, ingroup, and purity (Day, et al., 2014). The results of the current study suggest that moral motives can be affected by framing. Moral motives theory suggests that conservatives will not be motivated by social justice concerns. However, current results suggest that when conservatives are presented issues using the word "harm" or "care" as opposed to "purity" or "sanctity" they report more concern for social justice.

The differences between conservatives' and liberals' social justice, social order, and self-restraint motives supported previous research. Janoff-Bulmann and colleagues (2008) found that while conservatives showed stronger motivation toward social order and self-restraint, liberals showed stronger motivation toward social justice, and that they equally show motivation toward self-reliance (Janoff-Bulmann, et al., 2008). The current results are consistent with these previous findings. Conservatives showed stronger motivation toward social order and self-restraint while liberals showed more motivation toward social justice. This was true regardless of how political issues were framed.

There was no support for the hypothesis that a negative emotional response to the harm framing would affect social justice motives. Results suggest that the priming exercise failed to elicit high-activation negative emotions in either the harm or purity

condition. This result is in contrast with previous research examining the effects of framing on emotional response. Gross (2008) found that episodic framing of political issues could induce an emotional response and that a stronger emotional response led to a change in attitudes toward mandatory minimum sentencing for drug convictions. When the framing led to a strong emotional response, attitudes toward sentencing became more negative (Gross, 2008). The current research also contrasts with previous research suggesting that emotional responses form the basis for moral judgments. For example, Bloom (2014) found that when harm or disgust associations were induced, individuals who experienced strong self- or other-directed negative emotions made harsher judgments about moral issues (Bloom, 2014).

Previous framing research (Bloom, 2014; Gross, 2008; Iyengar, 1991) has relied on the use of vignettes to induce emotions. These vignettes used relatable, personal stories that provided emotional cues. The current study instead relied on a set of political issue statements and the consideration of supporting statements. The issues of immigration, the environment, and the economy were very divisive in the 2016 Presidential election. This could be seen at rallies, on cable news, and on social media. It was assumed that the emotional nature of US politics would be sufficient to stir emotions. Presenting political issues in single statements and forcing the consideration of supporting statements was not effective in causing an emotional response.

Previous research suggests that emotions play a central role in moral sense and political attitudes (Bloom, 2014; Haidt, 2001; Haidt, 2012; Marazetti, et al., 2013) and Hume's (1738/1978) first ethical thesis stated that reason alone cannot act as a motive. While most theories of moral reasoning suggest that emotion is the basis of decisions, the

current results suggest otherwise. While the framing method of the current study may not have been effective, perhaps the role of emotions is not as strong as previously believed. It could be that reason is more powerful and that emotions are merely an artifact of reason.

While the role of emotion in motivation was not supported, overall results support both prior research and the current hypotheses. The priming exercise did not induce an emotional reaction but did induce social justice motives. Framing political issues under the framework of moral foundations theory had a strong effect on social justice motives. When primed to consider political issues in the context of causing harm, conservatives showed more concern for social justice than when primed to consider purity. This is consistent with prior theories suggesting that moral sense is derived from the innate and universal motivation to avoid causing harm to others (Marazzeti, et al., 2014; Turiel, 1983).

When political issues were framed in the context of purity there were no effects on moral motives. Purity is mostly considered in the context of social issues such as women's, minority, and LGBT rights or religious freedom. Disgust is the emotion most related to purity. (Bloom, 2014; Haidt, 2012). Since the purity framing presented positive statements and avoided social issues, it was not expected to lead to feelings of disgust. Rather, it was expected that the purity framing would support previous research (Haidt, 2012; Janoff-Bulman, 2008) suggesting that there are differences in the moral foundations and motives of conservatives and liberals. The lack of purity framing effects on moral motives supported previous findings.

The effectiveness of framing political issues in the context of causing or avoiding harm could be an important consideration when devising communication strategy. When individuals are encouraged to consider whether a political issue or public policy causes harm to others, changes in moral motivation can occur. When immigration, environmental, education, or economic policies are framed to highlight the harm they will cause, individuals may show more concern for social justice. For example, if the issue of mass deportation of undocumented immigrants as described by President-elect Donald Trump (Lee, 2015) was instead framed to show the harm that such a policy would cause to families and communities, social justice motives could be induced. Inducing social justice motives could promote a change in moral motives and political attitudes toward immigration.

While previous research suggests that framing can influence both political and consumer attitudes (Gross, 2008; Iyengar, 1991; Nelson, 1997), the question remains whether influencing attitudes is enough to affect behavior. If framing can go further and not only change attitudes but also motivation, this could lead to a greater level of behavioral change. If behavioral change is the ultimate goal of political framing, perhaps the application of the MFT framework to political messaging could be an effective strategy. Overall, the current results suggest that morality could be an important consideration in framing political issues. Appealing to individuals' sense of causing or avoiding harm could be an effective means of framing political issues in a way that leads to positive changes in political attitudes.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has a number of limitations that if properly addressed could improve future research on framing and moral motives. The first limitation is in the design of the priming method. As mentioned earlier, this study relied on single statements about five different political issues. Future research could instead make use of vignettes in which a political issue is framed under the MFT framework. For example, future research might incorporate Gross' (2008) use of episodic framing. Framing an issue in episodically in the context of causing or avoiding harm would likely not only induce social justice motives but also emotions. This method would more consistent with real-world situations and offer stronger external validity since political issues are not typically discussed using single statements. Instead, political issues are framed in speeches, prepared remarks, television ads, or social media posts, among others. Presenting political issues in a format consistent with the ways individuals receive political information could evoke emotions and provide a better test of their role in mediating the relationship between harm framing and social justice motives.

Another consideration when considering the role of emotions is the focus on negative emotions. Though the circumplex model includes both negative and positive emotions, the current research focused on the negative. This was due to the negative nature of politics. Since the statements in the priming manipulation were positively framed, perhaps high-activation positive emotions promote social justice motives.

A second limitation is the method used to determine political identity. Those who reported being moderate or unsure were forced to choose either liberal or conservative. Feldman and Johnston (2014) found that political identity was not necessarily consistent

with political ideology. They argue that a unidimensional model of ideology is insufficient in determining political identity because those who identify as conservative often have liberal social attitudes. Those who identify as liberal may have conservative economic attitudes. They used advanced factor modeling to place individuals into three latent classes. Each class showed differences in how ideology is linked to identity (Feldman & Johnston, 2014). Future research could consider this type of method to more accurately measure political identity. A simpler option is to include those who identify as moderate or unsure as levels of the political identity variable.

A third limitation is in the use of a 2 x 2 ANOVA. While the analyses did yield statistically significant results, a pretest measure of moral motives would provide a more powerful test. Random assignment does equalize individual differences in the sample, however, having a baseline measure of moral motives for all participants would assure all groups were equal prior to exposure to the stimuli.

Conclusions

The current study examined whether framing political issues to induce feelings of harm would have an effect on moral motives. When political issues were framed to induce feelings of harm, conservatives showed more motivation toward social justice than when framed to induce feelings of purity. This suggests that framing a political issue in the context of causing or avoiding harm can cause conservatives' motivation toward social justice to be increased.

These results could be an important consideration when developing communication, media, and public relations strategies, especially in the current political climate in the United States. Liberal political views tend to focus on issues of fairness and

social justice, however, liberal messaging often relies on thematic framing (Gross, 2008). Episodic framing has been shown to be effective in changing political attitudes. Presenting issues of social justice episodically and in the context of causing harm to others may be a more effective method of messaging. Specifically, presenting a message focused on harm could lead conservatives to focus less on social order and self-restraint and more on social justice. Stronger motivation toward social justice issues could lead to positive changes in attitudes toward a number of political issues.

While Gross (2008), Haidt (2012), and Bloom (2014) suggest that emotions can be a basis of moral judgements and can lead to changes in motivation and political attitudes, the current results are contradictory. High activation negative emotions played no role in the change in social justice motives among conservatives. The current results suggest that emotions played no role in the relationship between how issues are framed and changes in moral motivation in general. This suggests that perhaps the relationship between emotions and morality may be weaker than previously thought.

The overall purpose of the current research was to show that there may be a more effective means of presenting political issues. The current state of political discourse is steeped in negative, fearful rhetoric. Both liberals and conservatives are guilty of presenting political issues in a way meant to stoke fear, anger, and anxiety. The result is a hyper-divisive state of political discourse. If the goal of politics is to sway attitudes, perhaps politicians and pundits, as well as citizens, should focus on rhetoric that removes ideology from the debate and frames political issues in a more positive manner. Removing typical ideological talking points from the discussion and focusing on the real-world effects of policies could lead to less political confrontation. Removing negative

language and, instead, framing political issues in a positive manner that appeals to individuals' sense of morality could influence motives while changing the discourse. The current research suggests that this method of communication could be the first step in changing the nature of American politics.

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Appendix A

Measure of Emotional Responses (Russell, 1980; Posner, Russell, and Peterson, 2005)

Instructions: This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate the extent to which the political statements you read and your written response caused you to feel these emotions using the following scale:

1 = Very Slightly or Not at All

2 = A Little

3 = Moderately

4 = Quite a Bit

5 = Extremely

___ Tense

___ Nervous

___ Stressed

___ Upset

___ Frustrated

___ Annoyed

___ Alarmed

___ Afraid

Appendix B

Moral Motives Scale (Janoff-Bulman, Manning, & Sheikh, 2006)

Directions: Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following statements using the following scale: **1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree.**

1. It's particularly important to me to demonstrate self-control in the face of temptation.
2. We should all be responsible for improving the welfare of others beyond our immediate circle of friends and family.
3. Giving people the freedom to choose the way they live threatens the societal bonds that hold us together.
4. I'm willing to put the necessary time and effort into providing for my own well-being and success.
5. It's an obligation, not a matter of personal preference, to provide for people worse off even if we're not close to them.
6. I value hard work and personal commitment when it comes to making decisions in my life.
7. People should not be completely free to express themselves through their own choice of lifestyle, even if they don't harm others.
8. When things get tough, I apply myself and work even harder to overcome difficulties.
9. Self-discipline in the lifestyle I choose is an important way for me to feel like a decent person.
10. It's important for those who are better off in society to work hard to provide more resources for those who are worse off.

11. By bucking tradition and choosing new lifestyles, people are actually threatening the wider society.
12. I demonstrate I'm a better person every time I exercise self-restraint rather than giving in to my desires.
13. I think it's important to take responsibility for my failures and setbacks rather than blame other people.
14. It's not always easy to avoid temptations, but for my own good I feel I really have to try my best.
15. If we look after ourselves, we still need to look after others in society.
16. Whether or not I have others to lean on, I think it's important for me to provide for myself.
17. When we try to get people to abide by our own code of behavior, we are not invading other people's privacy and right to choose for themselves.
18. In the healthiest societies those at the top feel responsible for providing better lives for those at the bottom.
19. Life is full of unhealthy attractions, so it's important for me to develop a strong sense of self-discipline and control.
20. In a decent society, people should not be free to make their own choices about how to live their lives, but should attend to community standards.