

The Psychology of Economic Ideology: Emotion, Motivation, and Moral Intuition

Jesse Graham, Ravi Iyer, & Peter Meindl

Jesse Graham is Assistant Professor of Psychology and Principle Investigator at the Values, Ideology, and Morality Lab at the University of Southern California. His research is focused on how ideological and moral values shape behavior outside of conscious awareness, and how this varies across individuals and cultures. He has published numerous academic articles on the subject and his work has received press coverage in a variety of media outlets including *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and CNN.

Ravi Iyer is a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Southern California and the Principal Data Scientist for Ranker.com. His academic research focusses on the psychological dispositions of liberals, conservatives, and libertarians, with an eye towards increasing inter-ideological understanding. His work has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Reason Magazine* and *Good Magazine*.

Peter Meindl is a graduate student of psychology and researcher at the Values, Ideology, and Morality Lab at the University of Southern California.

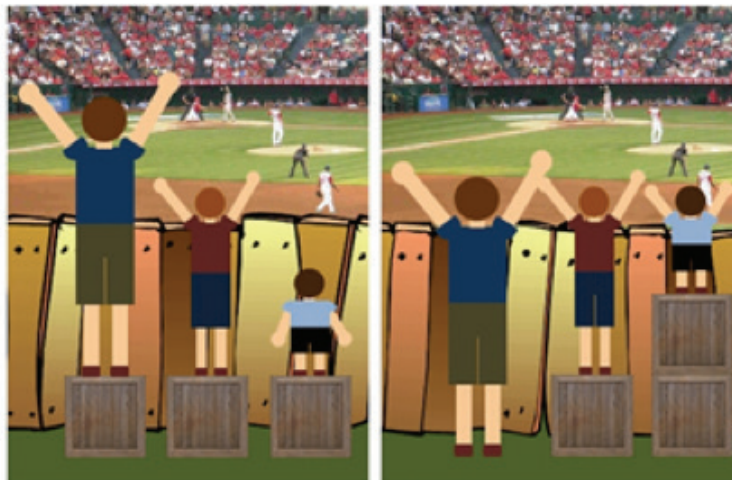
INTRODUCTION: GOING DEEPER THAN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

A popular recent meme on liberal social networks and left-leaning blogs summarizes ideological differences as follows:

EQUALITY

TO A CONSERVATIVE

TO A LIBERAL



While the partisan message is clear (only with liberalism's compassionate box-stacking does everyone get to watch baseball), conservative and libertarian critics of liberal equality also helped spread the image, mocking the inherent unfairness of giving some people more than others in order to ensure that outcomes are equal. What's more fair: giving everyone the same box to stand on (equality of opportunity), or distributing boxes so that everyone ends up in the same position (equality of outcomes)?

This conflict over a crudely-drawn picture on the internet illustrates a deep schism in American culture, coloring political debates over a wide range of topics—from affirmative action to health care to economic policy. Political campaigns have spent large amounts of money on strategic communications, trying to use key words or phrases to "frame" such issues in order to appeal to larger portions of the electorate (e.g., Lakoff, 2004). However, understanding ideological divisions over economic fairness requires going deeper than words and phrases, because these conflicting visions of fairness are rooted in different underlying intuitions, emotions, and motivations. Partisans on both sides tend to see their vision of fairness as the only vision a moral person could have, while the other side's vision must be either amoral (based on delusion, stupidity, or factual errors) or downright immoral (based on greed, dishonesty, or prejudice). However, psychological work on justice and morality provides evidence that *both* visions of fairness—which we refer to as equity vs. equality—are based on moral intuitions.

Main Point of This Paper

Our goal is to provide an empirical psychological review of the emotional and cognitive processes underlying economic ideologies, with a focus on fairness intuitions of equity vs. equality. Our main point is that these conflicting intuitions are powerful motivators for political and social behaviors (from voting to demonstrating), and understanding them will be crucial for motivating and enacting any societal changes in economic policy.

Roadmap of This Paper

In the next section of the paper we give an overview of current moral and political psychology, fields that have demonstrated the centrality of automatic intuitions in ideology, moral judgment, and moral behavior. In the third section we focus on the competing values of equality and equity, and the distinct goals, motives, and intuitions underlying these different visions of economic fairness. This section also uses the example of libertarians to show how a particular economic ideology has psychological roots in moral intuitions, interpersonal style, and degrees of emotionality in decision-making. In the fourth section we review evidence of experimental interventions that could be used to promote equality intuitions over equity intuitions. Finally, we end by describing future directions for the psychological understanding of economic fairness, highlighting further areas for policy applications.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CURRENT MORAL AND POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY: THE IMPORTANCE OF INTUITIONS AND VALUE PLURALISM

Empirical psychology has seen a resurgence of interest in both morality and political ideology in the last 15 years, due in part to increased attention to non-conscious aspects of human thought and behavior (for detailed reviews see Haidt & Kesebir, 2008; Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009; Nosek, Graham, & Hawkins, 2010). In this section we give an overview of this literature, beginning with political ideology.

A single left-right ideological dimension predicts a wide range of cognitive styles and behaviors. For much of the last century, the dominant thesis held by social scientists was that laypeople's political views were neither stable nor motivationally powerful enough for ideological differences to have a reliably meaningful impact on people's social policy stances (Jost, 2006). Instead, many scholars believed that public opinion was primarily manufactured by factors such as the temporary impact of current events and political rhetoric. While these factors clearly play a major role in the current state of partisanship in the United States and elsewhere, recent research suggests that the chasms between the policy positions of those on the left and the right also stem from more deep-seated individual differences. Psychologists have revealed biological and psychological differences between those on the left and those on the right, which play a significant role in people's views on economic inequality.

For instance, the results of twin studies suggest that political attitudes are partly heritable (Alford, Funk, & Hibbing, 2005). Though it is difficult to accurately quantify the influence that genes have on social attitudes, research suggests that about 20% to 40% of variability in political attitudes is related to people's genes (Martin et al., 1986). Similarly, recent physiological research has found predictors of ideological beliefs in non-conscious bodily reactions (Dodd et al., 2012). For example, political views can be predicted by physiological responses (startle eye blink, skin conductance) to threatening sounds and pictures (Oxley et al., 2012), with conservatives more automatically reactive than liberals. Finally, psychologists have recently discovered fundamental motivational differences between those on the left and those on the right. For instance, research suggests that conservatives attend more to aversive "avoidance" stimuli, such as perceived threats, whereas liberals attend more to pleasing "approach" stimuli, such as potential rewards; this manifests in debates about morality, with conservatives focused more on preventing the bad and liberals focused more on promoting the good (Janoff-Bulman, Sheikh, & Hepp, 2009).

Importantly, many critical individual differences affect political thought at an automatic or intuitive level, often outside of conscious awareness or control. One individual difference thought to have a non-conscious impact on policy views is "system justification," the motivated justification of existing social and economic inequalities (Jost & Hunyady, 2003). Conservatives are more likely than liberals to justify the economic status quo, while liberals are more likely to question the status quo in pursuit of greater economic equality. It is important to note that system justification occurs even when it is against one's own self-inter-

est to do so; for instance, conservatives who are relatively poor are more likely to justify the current level of economic inequality than poor liberals (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004).

It is also important to note that while research on left vs. right ideological orientations is often framed as a liberal-conservative dichotomy, most Americans fall in the middle of the spectrum (Pew, 2012), and those on the extreme left and extreme right represent a vocal minority. While cognitive and behavioral sciences have revealed many attitudes and preferences correlated with political ideology, it is thus important to keep in mind that for most Americans there can be some appeal to values most associated with liberals and those most associated with conservatives.

Like ideology, morality is increasingly understood as an intuition-driven phenomenon. As is the case with individual differences in ideology, individual differences in moral thought (judgments, beliefs, and attitudes about what is morally right or wrong) seem to largely derive from unconscious processes. According to Haidt's Social Intuitionist Model (SIM) of moral judgment and decision-making, most of moral judgment and decision-making is driven by people's initial affective intuitions (Haidt, 2001; Haidt & Bjorklund, 2007). Thus, for instance, a person might think that they judge economic inequality to be morally unacceptable because it violates their consciously-held moral ideals, but in actuality their judgment may be primarily driven by a flash of negative emotion (such as disgust) upon hearing about inequality. This idea has been substantiated by the results of myriad studies. For instance, disgusting smells and environments can increase the severity of moral judgments (Schnall, Haidt, Clore, & Jordan, 2008), even when disgust is activated through hypnosis (Wheatley & Haidt, 2005). In contrast, positive mood inductions have been shown to decrease the severity of moral judgments, making people more likely to deem a harmful action morally acceptable (Valdesolo & Desteno, 2006).

According to Moral Foundations Theory (Graham, Haidt, Koleva, Iyer, Motyl, Wojcik, & Ditto, 2013; Haidt & Graham, 2007), people have a discrete set of moral intuitions upon which cultures build moral systems, and upon which individuals make moral judgments. According to this view, these intuitive sensitivities to patterns in the social world (e.g., instances of cheating or betrayal) act like "moral taste buds" that may become more or less sensitive throughout the lifespan. Current theory suggests that the most important moral foundations are concerns about a) care/harm, b) fairness/cheating, c) group loyalty/betrayal, d) respect/subversion of authority, and e) purity/degradation (Graham et al., 2013).

In addition to work on Moral Foundations Theory, there also exists a substantial amount of research on general (i.e., not necessarily moral) values and personal concerns. One of the most studied sets of values is Shalom Schwartz' list of 11 theoretically and empirically derived basic human values (self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, tradition, conformity, benevolence, and universalism; Schwartz, 1992).

Moral intuitions and values predict political beliefs and behaviors. One of the more important findings of values research is that people's moral intuitions and values seem to

strongly predict their political beliefs, policy stances, and politically-relevant behaviors. While political liberals value care and fairness much more than loyalty, authority, or purity, conservatives value all five foundation-related concerns relatively equally (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009). These moral intuitions also appear to predict attitudes about a host of hot-button policy issues (e.g., gay marriage, stem cell research) over and above factors such as political ideology, education, religious attendance, gender, and age (Koleva et al., 2012). Similarly, research demonstrates that people's values predict their voting behavior—even more so than general personality traits like openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability (Caprara, Schwartz, Capanna, & Vecchi-one, 2006). These findings suggest that liberals' and conservatives' disparate moral intuitions and values will also play an important role in their beliefs and behaviors concerning economic inequality.

Finally, there is reason to believe that a person's current moral intuitions and values are amenable to change. For instance, theory suggests that regardless of which moral intuitions dominate a person's moral thought at present, new moral beliefs may emerge throughout the lifespan if they are attached to the moral senses people possess (Rozin, 1999), and research suggests that people's moral intuitions and values change across the lifespan (Dunlop, Walker, & Matsuba, 2013). Recent research also suggests that people's current moral intuitions can be leveraged to change their moral beliefs. For instance, conservatives' intuitive moral concern about disgust can be activated in order to increase their support for environmental regulations (Feinberg & Willer, 2013); in the same way, it is possible that moral concerns that are seemingly unrelated to economic inequality (e.g., disgust, respect for authority, and/or loyalty to one's ingroup) could potentially be activated in order to increase people's concerns about economic inequality. This possibility will be explored below in section 5; first, we detail the distinct psychological processes underlying intuitions of equality and intuitions of equity.

EQUALITY VS. EQUITY

The distinction between Equity and Equality represents a fundamental cleavage in justice motivation. When research concerning intuitive primacy in moral decision making is taken into account, it is no longer surprising that logically sound rational arguments for liberal (e.g. Rawls, 1971) or conservative (e.g. Rand & Braden, 1964) visions of what constitutes a fair distribution of wealth in society have failed in convincing anyone who did not already subscribe to those respective philosophies. However, just as the intuitionist perspective has shown that while there are multiple moral concerns that people have, there are not an infinite number (Graham et al., 2013), so too has research specifically on justice and fairness shown that while there are many ways to define justice, there are a few specific ways of defining justice that capture most of the variance that we see in the world.

Many visions of fairness can be grouped into principles that relate to equality, where rewards are distributed equally, and principles that relate to equity, where rewards are dis-

tributed in proportion to inputs and deservingness. This distinction has a long history in psychology. Morton Deutsch (1975) conducted years of research showing how principles of equity are motivated by productivity goals, while concerns about equality are motivated by social goals. He also posited a third justice principle, need, where rewards are given to those who need it most, yet multiple other research groups (Iyer, Read, & Correia, 2010; Kazemi & Eek, 2007; Rasinski, 1987) have found that the equality and need dimensions of fairness are psychometrically very close to each other. A great deal of research concerns the distinction between groups that care more about equality/need and groups that care more about equity (e.g. people from collectivist vs. individualist cultures; Bem, 1974; Carson & Banuazizi, 2008; Clark & Mills, 1979; Leung & Park, 1986; Rasinski, 1987; Stake, 1985), whereas researchers almost never focus solely on separating groups that care about equality from groups that care about need, suggesting that the distinction between equality and need has little pragmatic utility.

The Equality/Equity distinction maps onto other basic psychological distinctions. This is not to say that it is impossible to distinguish other justice motivations from equality or equity. Rather, the distinction between equality and equity maps onto prominent broad distinctions in psychology between communal vs. agentic goals (Bem, 1974), approach vs. avoidance motivations (Janoff-Bulman et al., 2009), liberal vs. conservative morality (Lakoff, 2004), warmth vs. competence (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002), and masculine vs. feminine culture (Hofstede, 1984), such that most posited justice principles are classifiable in terms of this fundamental cleavage. For example, Tom Tyler (e.g. Tyler & Lind, 1992) has done a great deal of research on procedural justice, yet procedural justice may simply concern the allocation of socio-emotional goods (e.g., Tornblom & Foa, 1983), and judgments of outcomes and procedures are highly correlated (Hauenstein, McGonigle, & Flinder, 2001). Finer distinctions made by researchers may be useful in certain domains. However, this broad distinction underlies the important political differences we see today, in terms of the debate between those who want to create a society that rewards our most productive (e.g., fiscal conservatives) and those who want to create a society that provides a relatively equal distribution of wealth (e.g., populist liberals).

Why do some people endorse equality while others focus on equity? Neuroscientists and evolutionary psychologists have connected moral reasoning with social function, summarized by the phrase “moral thinking is for social doing” (Haidt, 2007). Concerns about fairness are found across all human cultures (Roth, Prasnikar, Okuno-Fujiwara, & Zamir, 1991), suggesting an evolutionary social function for such intuitions. Across a wide array of research, caring for the social and emotional well-being of others has been shown to underlie endorsement of equality, while ensuring productivity has been shown to underlie endorsement of equity (Deutsch, 1975; Iyer, Read, & Correia, 2010).

In this way, considering the function of justice motivation brings coherence to a wide array of justice research. For example, groups that emphasize the morality of care tend to be more concerned about outcome equality. Women generally endorse equality more than

men, with men more concerned about “rights and justice” and women more concerned about “rights and care” (Lyons, 1983; Swap & Rubin, 1983). Bem’s (1974) Sex Role Inventory was based on the observation that people believe it is more desirable for women to be “compassionate” and men to be “ambitious,” which mirrors Bakan’s (1966) description of the agentic and communal orientations and Fiske’s (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002) description of how individuals are primarily judged as being warm and/or competent. In the European Values Survey data women perceived the goal of “guaranteeing that basic needs are met for all, in terms of food, housing, clothing, education, health” to be more important than did men (Arts & Gellissen, 2001).

Liberals also tend to place a greater emphasis on empathy and care (McCue & Gopoiian, 2000), as articulated by Obama’s emphasis on empathy as an important quality in a Supreme Court Justice (Hook & Parsons, 2009)—a statement that was widely ridiculed by those on the right (Garrett, 2009). An analysis of European Values Survey data found that those who place themselves further left on the political spectrum were more likely to endorse “eliminating large inequalities in income among citizens” (Arts & Gellissen, 2001).

In contrast, individuals on the right are more likely to endorse “recognizing people on their merits” (Arts & Gellissen, 2001). While some scholars have characterized conservative opposition to inequality as rigidity (e.g. Jost & Thompson, 2000; Knowles, Lowery, Hogan, & Chow, 2009), conservative policies such as opposition to affirmative action have been found to be rooted in meritocratic (as opposed to anti-egalitarian) motivations (Bobocel, Son Hing, Davey, Stanley, & Zanna, 1998; Nosworthy, Lea, & Lindsay, 1995). Conservatives have been found to be less willing to provide aid to the needy, but when those in need of aid are seen to have fulfilled their social responsibilities, conservatives are indeed willing to provide such aid (Skitka & Tetlock, 1993). The liberal stereotype of conservatives as “heartless” has been shown to be exaggerated in both psychology studies (Graham, Nosek, & Haidt, 2012) and in some analyses of conservative behavior (e.g., charitable giving; Brooks, 2006).

Rather than being heartless, groups that place greater emphasis on equity and deservingness tend to have stable productivity orientations that may trump empathic feelings (Iyer, Read, & Correia, 2010). Men are more often described as ambitious (Bem, 1974), agentic (Bakkan, 1966), and competent (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002) and therefore may be more willing to tolerate inequality in the service of greater productivity. Conservatives also care about economic growth more than liberals do (Rasinski, 1987).

The psychological roots of libertarian equity. Although most political psychology research focuses on liberals vs. conservatives, an increasing number of Americans refuse to self-identify as either of these because they self-identify as libertarian, generally understood to indicate that they are liberal on social issues and conservative on economic issues. In 2012 we conducted the largest study ever undertaken on this group, including dozens of morality and personality scales given to nearly 12,000 self-identified libertarians (Iyer, Koleva, Graham, Ditto, & Haidt, 2012). We first found that libertarians were on the low end of the distribution for all

five moral foundations: they had the relatively low care and fairness concerns of conservatives, but also the relatively low loyalty, authority, and purity concerns of liberals. Several other morality scales (measuring moral identity, empathy, etc.) showed the same characteristic low scores, while non-clinical measures of psychopathy showed libertarians scoring higher than liberals or conservatives. However, libertarians were the most concerned about liberty as a value in and of itself (regardless of care/harm concerns), and also had high scores on measures of the Protestant Work Ethic. Most importantly, we found that this libertarian endorsement of equity over equality—and of productivity over care motivations—was mediated by factors that on the surface seem to have little to do with economic ideology. Specifically, these mediating factors were interpersonal style (libertarians are particularly individualist, with less bonding and attachments to others) and cognitive style (libertarians are particularly likely to prefer systemizing to empathizing, and prefer reason to emotion).

The findings of this study serve as an example to illustrate the larger point that economic ideologies—even for people who take pride in their preferencing of reason over emotion—have their roots in non-conscious psychological factors such as temperament, personality, and interpersonal attachment. These factors also help determine what vision of fairness different people will gravitate towards; however, as the next section shows, this does not mean that such visions cannot be changed.

MOVING FROM EQUITY TO EQUALITY

Threat and scarcity promote conservatism, and promote equity over equality. The observation that productivity goals underlie equity motivations, while care goals underlie equality motivations, allows one to better understand historical fluctuations in societal visions of fairness. In times of scarcity, war, or depression, when productivity is essential for the group's survival, it is unsurprising that groups that emphasize productivity over care (e.g., the military, the Tea Party, or nationalistic groups) find it easier to attract membership. In general conservatives are more reactive to threat (Oxley et. al, 2008) and more risk averse (Schaffner, 2009), and thus they may perceive threatening situations more readily. Situations that engender threat (e.g., 9/11 [Landau et al., 2004] or economic scarcity [Skitka & Tetlock, 1992]) do tend to lead people, even self identified liberals, to be more conservative in their behaviors and attitudes.

When basic needs are satisfied or relationships are made salient, Equality considerations attain prominence. In contrast, as society gets wealthier and basic survival needs are satisfied (Inglehart, 1977), more resources are available to care for others, which means that society could be expected to shift toward an equality orientation. Indeed, recent years have seen a marked decrease in war (Goldstein, 2011) and crime (The Economist, 2013), along with increased support for marriage equality (Pew, 2013). Care goals can also be situationally activated in individuals. For example, simply calling an economic task The Community Game, as opposed to calling it The Wall Street Game (Ross & Samuels, 1993), changing the environment of a situation to a neighborhood, instead of a company (Leung & Park, 1986), or explicitly setting

the goal of a situation to be productivity or social harmony (Stake, 1985; Kazemi & Eek, 2007) all lead individuals to be more concerned about equality and less concerned about equity. People also tend to use the equity principle with individuals to whom they feel no connection (Kahn, Krulewitz, O’Leary, & Lamm, 1980; McGillicuddy-de Lisi, Watkins, & Vinchur, 1994), and individuals who desire a close relationship can even be offended when the equity rule is applied to them (Clark & Mills, 1979). Any intervention that improves the relatedness of individuals is likely to stimulate equality motivations relative to equity motivations.

Promoting equality over equity by charting national well-being in addition to national productivity. The most powerful reminder of a productivity goal is the focus on GDP (gross domestic product) as a measure of national progress, and thus it is unsurprising that liberals, who may put care goals ahead of productivity goals, have been most likely to question this focus. In his inauguration speech President Obama stated: “The success of our economy has always depended not just on the size of our gross domestic product, but on the reach of our prosperity; on the ability to extend opportunity to every willing heart – not out of charity, but because it is the surest route to our common good.” Obama’s opinion is consistent with that of psychologists who study subjective well-being and who have argued strongly that society needs to measure well-being (Diener & Seligman, 2004) to complement, if not replace, measures of national productivity, as our primary measure of societal progress. This line of research has developed enough that the government of Bhutan has agreed to use “Gross National Happiness” to measure development (Esty, 2004) and the government of France has plans to include quality of life as a measure of the country’s economic health (Jolly, 2009). In this way societies could explicitly promote equality over equity, by emphasizing care as well as productivity in their indices of progress.

CURRENT RESEARCH AND FUTURE APPLICATIONS

Expanding fairness conceptions. As described above, perceptions of justice cannot be distilled into one unitary construct; people conceptualize justice in many different ways. The simplest way of making sense of the wide array of opinions about distributive justice is to categorize them as a) concerns about equity and b) concerns about equality (cf. Deutsch, 1975). Though this is an efficient way of categorizing beliefs about distributive justice, it may sometimes be overly simplistic, as theory (Deutsch, 1985) as well as recent research (Meindl, Iyer, & Graham, 2013) suggests that people often endorse at least three types of equity principles—effort-based distribution (based on the amount of effort people put into their work), skill-based distribution (based on the degree to which people possess valued skills), and contribution based distribution (based on the degree to which people positively contribute to their society); and at least five different “non-equity” justice principles—need-based (i.e., at least everyone’s basic needs are met), needs-only (everyone receives *only* what they need, and no more), utilitarian (distribution is determined solely by what is best for society as a whole), liberty-based (distribution is determined by the marketplace, not the government), and equality (everyone receives the same amount). Thus, understanding peo-

ple's views on equality- and equity-based justice principles might provide a large amount of information about people's beliefs about economic inequality (and about policies designed to address it), but delving deeper and taking account of people's thoughts on a wider array of justice principles might allow for an even better understanding of the roadblocks that stand in the way of widespread endorsement of greater economic equality.

Value conflicts, and their significance to economic inequality. One reason why such an expansion of justice conceptions might be helpful for researchers and policy makers concerned with egregious economic inequality is that it might allow them to better understand—and hence better address—value conflicts. People who oppose policies designed to reduce economic inequality may oftentimes do so not because they are opposed to greater equality, but because they are concerned about the consequences that such change might have in relation to other values they hold (e.g., it might reduce liberty or work ethic). If researchers and policy makers only took into account whether people put more value on equity or non-equity-based principles of distributive justice, this could blind them to conflicts between more specific justice principles (e.g., equality vs. utilitarian, or effort-based equity vs. contribution-based equity) and how such conflicts can affect people's views on economic inequality.

At least two types of value conflicts might influence people's views on economic inequality. Moral values might conflict with other moral values (e.g., the desire to reduce suffering vs. the desire for a highly productive society) to produce a “moral-moral” conflict, and moral values might conflict with more egoistic values (e.g., the desire for others' well-being vs. the desire for one's own success and achievement) to produce a “moral-egoistic” conflict.

Eliminating these types of value conflicts is important because these conflicts are likely to temper the impact that moral intuitions and personal values have on policy preferences and political behavior. Addressing value conflicts may be especially important for increasing support for equality initiatives, because value conflicts might partly explain why it is so difficult to alter people's opinions about policies designed to reduce inequality. A substantial amount of research suggests that it is relatively easy to change the degree to which people consider current levels of economic inequality to be problematic. Simply educating people on the degree to which economic inequality exists appears to have an exceptionally strong influence on the degree to which people perceive economic inequality to be a problem (Norton & Ariely, 2011). But changing the degree to which people see current levels of inequality as problematic does not seem to change the degree to which they endorse specific policy initiatives designed to reduce inequality (Kuziemko, Norton, Saez & Stantcheva, 2013). One possible explanation for this pattern of findings is that people's new views pertaining to economic inequality (i.e., widening gaps between the rich and poor feel wrong and unfair) conflict with other deeply held values—either egoistic or moralistic (e.g., people should be rewarded based on their contribution to society). In order to increase support for initiatives designed to reduce inequality, policy makers may need to increase people's support for equality principles while simultaneously reducing support for equity or egoistic principles that conflict with equality principles.

Political moderates and independents. Although we have contrasted the fairness intuitions of equality (based on care concerns) and equity (based on productivity concerns), and highlighted the different admixtures of these concerns in liberals and conservatives, the fact remains that most Americans place themselves near the middle of the political spectrum, not on the ideological extremes. Most Americans, then, will respond to signs of unfairness along both equality and equity lines at one time or another. Our research indicates that moderates fall somewhere between liberals and conservatives in terms of the balance of equity vs. equality they use in making moral judgments (Iyer et al., 2012; Meindl, Iyer, & Graham, 2013). However, there is research indicating that moderates and those who are less extreme in terms of their ideology may be more willing to consider tradeoffs in policies (Fernbach, Rogers, Fox, & Sloman, 2013). With the possible exception of extreme libertarians (who specifically eschew care concerns), most individuals have concerns about both care/equality and about proportionality/equity. However, the most extreme partisans may be more certain of their beliefs (Fernbach et al., 2013) and therefore less willing to consider the fact that the outcomes of economic policies may be uncertain, or that economic policies often involve tradeoffs between helping the unfortunate and rewarding unproductive behavior. Conservatives may be more likely to be certain in their beliefs than liberals due to a greater need for cognitive consistency (Iyer, 2012; Liu & Ditto, 2013; Motyl & Iyer, 2013) and therefore less likely to accept that such tradeoffs exist, which may explain rhetoric that portrays helping the needy as actually detrimental to the less fortunate through the creation of a “culture of dependence.”

But it is likely that many psychological tendencies follow a curvilinear trajectory across the political spectrum, with extreme partisans resembling each other more than moderates (e.g., Crawford & Xhambazi, in press; Kahan, 2013). Scientists are only beginning to examine moderates and independents as groups of interest in themselves, rather than just as control groups for liberalism or conservatism. For example, Hawkins and Nosek (2011) examined the explicit (self-reported) political party (Dem/Rep) preferences among self-described independents, as well as their implicit preferences, measured via a reaction-time task involving sorting Democratic and Republican pictures and words. They found that implicit or non-conscious identification with Democrats or Republicans predicted whether the independents would prefer generous or stringent welfare programs, suggesting that many independents reliably lean one way or another, even if they don't report that leaning in their self-assessment—and possibly even if they aren't consciously aware of it themselves. There remains a great deal to learn about moderates and independents and how their motives and goals differ from the more well-studied liberals and conservatives.

Future research and policy implications. Fortunately, psychological research points to various strategies for combatting both types of value conflicts. When it comes to “moral moral” value conflicts, one way to make it more likely that a preferred moral value (e.g., economic equality) will win out over another moral value is to ask people to briefly write about the importance of the preferred value. This simple task has been shown to cause people to favor fairness over loyalty in situations in which the two values conflict (Waytz, Dungan, & Young,

2013). Another powerful strategy is to simultaneously activate multiple moral intuitions in the service of the preferred value. For instance, research suggests that when conservative Americans are led to think of the consequences of environmental degradation as disgusting (vs. harmful), they are more likely to endorse “green” policies (Feinberg & Willer, 2013).

Another simple technique to encourage people to adhere to moral values rather than egoistic values is to temporarily alter a person’s psychological level of construal. According to Construal Level Theory (Trope & Liberman, 2010), people construe situations and other people on either an abstract (high) level or a concrete (low) level. Research also suggests that people are more likely to act in accord with what they believe is right (as opposed to their more egoistic values) when they are in a state of abstract construal (Torelli & Kaikati, 2009). Abstract levels of construal can be activated through very quick and simple manipulations, such as asking people why (instead of how) certain actions are performed; this has been shown to actually reduce automatic racial prejudice (Luguri, Napier, & Dovidio, 2012). Some research even suggests that subtle changes to the wording in essays can subliminally activate abstract levels of construal (Fujita, Trope, Liberman, & Levin-Sagi, 2006), suggesting further avenues for promoting equality over equity.

CONCLUSION

Opinions about economic fairness are based in part on intuitive responses to signs of fairness and unfairness. People can radically disagree about the merits of different economic policies because there are multiple kinds of fairness intuitions. In this paper we have focused on intuitions of equity (involving values of work ethic and proportionality) and intuitions of equality (involving values of care and compassion), and the distinct goals and motivations associated with each. Different ideological temperaments (liberal vs. conservative) and situations (scarcity vs. plenty) can give rise to different emotions, motivations, and intuitions that support caring about one or the other. Changing public sentiment about economic policies, then, will largely concern evoking the right emotions and intuitions (more caring/hope, less outrage/scarcity/fear if you want more equality), and this will be more complicated than simply using the right buzzwords.

While equity/equality is a fundamental dichotomy in justice research, and individuals differ in which vision of fairness they most often resonate with, it should be noted that equality and equity are both values that *everyone* cares about to some degree. Conflicts between these values are not just interpersonal, as in liberal-conservative debates, but intrapersonal, with individuals feeling conflicts between different moral intuitions of what’s right and what’s wrong. Appeals that address equity concerns as well as equality concerns—for example by stressing equality of opportunity as well as equality of outcomes—could have the greatest impact, by resolving these conflicting moral visions we all share.

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