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Identity Fusion and the Psychology of Political Extremism

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Identity Fusion and the Psychology of Political Extremism

by

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Dedication

To my parents, my brother Brien and my sister Erin. They say you can't pick your family, but if I could I don't think I would've picked any other.

Acknowledgements

“No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main” has been a cliché ever since John Donne wrote it in the 17th century. As social psychologists know, this suggests there may be a kernel of truth to it. In the case of this dissertation, the kernel is more like a boulder. This dissertation was built on a continent of people who supported me in graduate school and before, and without these people I would never have reached this point.

My advisor, Bill Swann, shaped my research skills and interests throughout my graduate career. The research presented here, and all the research from this point on, has been shaped by his willingness to work with me and his support, and I know that my entire career from this point forward reflects his help in teaching me how to nurture my ideas and plan my work. Likewise Jamie Pennebaker’s help and support in my research at UT and outside of UT has been invaluable, and I know that my perspective on the field of psychology and research in general reflects his insight and experience. It wasn’t just the faculty in social psychology, either. The community of students in social psychology at UT is a fantastic community and having you all around made my stress lighter and the office more fun.

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significantly better because of it. Their commitment to making this research the best it could be was crucial, but their kindness and support in how they displayed this commitment made this whole experience significantly easier than it could have been.

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Identity Fusion and the Psychology of Political Extremism

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Past research in the psychology of extremism has argued that extremism is a psychological state characterized by a perception that the group is absolutely correct, endowed with moral authority, and threatened or opposed by some active group or entity working against the ingroup. There has been little research which has focused on what psychological processes may underlie this state. It is proposed in this dissertation that extremism is an outgrowth of identity fusion, a state in which the personal and social levels of the self-concept become closely aligned so that they may not be activated independently of each other. Identity fusion is theorized to follow from self-verification motives interacting with salient social identities, so that when people need verification for the way they see themselves and a group which provides such verification is activated, fusion may result. Three studies were conducted to examine different aspects of the identity fusion-extremism link. In Study 1, experimenters manipulated the need for self-verification motives and the social context to determine if self-verification predicted the

development of fusion with a verifying, salient group. This study found little evidence of this link. Study 2 used counterattitudinal messages to assess the link between fusion and absolutist patterns of thinking. Fused participants were found to show significantly more emotional response to and rejection of counterattidudinal messages, in line predictions. Finally, Study 3 examined the behavioral and linguistic correlates of fusion and found some evidence that fusion predicted self-reported behaviors in line with political extremism and patterns of language use which emphasized the personal self.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Recent events have focused international attention on the phenomenon of extremism. The attacks in America, Spain, Britain, and elsewhere have forced the world to look at topics of group conflict, revenge, anger, and a host of other related concerns. These attacks and their violent aftershocks around the world pose a clear question for social psychology. They demonstrate that in the service of their ideals, people can be motivated to kill others, to suffer massive costs to their personal comfort and well-being, and even to extinguish themselves if they see a particular benefit to these actions. These phenomena should fascinate social psychology, where the basic human motivations are assumed to revolve in some fashion or another around self-protection. Whether discussing the core human social motives of enhancement (e.g. Taylor & Brown, 1988), self-verification (Swann, 1984), or just the basic fear of death (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991), a core assumption in social psychology is that individuals are motivated by a desire to protect the self from harm, change, or extinction. The fact that some causes or groups are able to override this desire to the point where people will undertake actions harmful or lethal to the self suggests that some powerful psychological process must be operating in these situations. An examination of this process, and exactly what is happening in the case of extremist behavior, has the potential to contribute a great deal to our understanding of both extremist behavior specifically and also human motivations and processes in general.

However, despite the academic and applied utility of this research, extremism has been relatively under-studied in social psychology, and rarely as a state in and of itself. For the most part, research on extremism has been found in work on group conflict or the development of prejudice, which has focused primarily on what conditions lead individuals to reject or engage in conflict with other groups. This research has mainly focused on the phenomenon at the level of generalized affect or negative beliefs about outgroups. Research on the specific psychological state of those individuals most likely to engage in violent, aggressive, or even self-damaging behavior in the service of the group has been less common.

This dissertation seeks to expand research on extremism by examining the psychological correlates of extremism, especially those related to the impact of self and social identity processes on extremist attitudes and behavior. It is proposed that extremism, a psychological state characterized by a belief that a group that an individual belongs to is morally right, absolutely correct, and threatened by active outgroups, is related to a particular construction of the self-concept. This construction is one in which the group membership comes to dominate the members' social worlds to the extent that it becomes a fundamental part of their self-definition. The motivation for this is assumed to be related to self-verification, a desire to be seen by others in the same way as the person sees him or herself. Past research on extremism, self and social identity is examined, and three studies are presented which attempt to expand the existing understanding of extremism.

EXTREMISM: DEFINITION AND PAST RESEARCH

Before addressing the main questions of this proposal, it is necessary to define one of the basic terms. Extremism has been somewhat under-studied in social psychology, and most research on extremism and extremist behavior in social psychology has focused on group conflict and those situational factors that lead a group towards violent actions against another (e.g. Olzak, Shanahan, & McEarney, 1996; Jackson, 1993). This approach is problematic, in that these theories are applied at the level of the group and do not satisfactorily explain the specific psychology of the individual group members acting in extremist ways (Glaser, Dixit, & Green 2002; Turpin-Petrosino, 2002). The result is that, while social scientists do know a fair amount about the conditions in which group tensions are likely to increase, there is less general agreement on the conditions that lead someone to join a group that has an extremist ideology or to develop an extremist mindset once they are in the group. Moreover, there is not a generally accepted definition for what characterizes an extremist mindset.

The definition of extremism used in this research is drawn from what research there is on the psychology of extremism, and is generated from those points of agreement found in the literature. For the most part, researchers seem to agree that extremists show three specific characteristics. These are:

1. The belief that the group is endowed with moral authority in its beliefs or teachings, so that belonging to or agreeing with this group is a moral good.

2. The belief that the group is absolutely correct, so that the group's beliefs cannot be argued with or subdivided, and

3. The belief that the group is actively threatened or opposed by other groups.

The first tenet, the belief that the group is morally correct, is consistently shown to be an important part of distinguishing between extremist and non-extremist groups (Smith, 2004; McCormick 2003; Crenshaw, 2000). When a group is seen as moral, rather than simply logically correct, belonging to that group becomes a moral imperative. People who disagree with the group are seen as acting immorally, a belief which makes it easier for the extremist to develop negative attitudes towards outgroup members (Sande, Goethals, Ferrari, & Worth, 1989).

The second tenet, the belief that the group is absolutely correct, is widely seen as another element that characterizes the psychology of extremism (Haslam & Turner, 1995; Baron, Crawley, & Paulina 2003; Altemeyer & Hunsberger 1992; 2004). Because the group is seen as wholly correct in all its teachings, the distinction between an ingroup (and therefore moral) and an outgroup (and therefore immoral) person is sharp and distinct. Any deviation from the teachings or beliefs of the ingroup is enough to mark an individual as not belonging to the ingroup. This makes the distinction between the ingroup and the outgroup a sharp binary, rather than a question of degrees of similarity (Haslam & Turner, 1995).

The third tenet, the belief that the ingroup is beset by active outgroups working against it, is sometimes presented as a result of other elements of extremism, and

sometimes as an inherent component of extremism (e.g. Altemeyer & Hunsberger 1992). It is a very common element of extremist belief, and is bolstered by the first two elements of extremism. If an extremist sees the world as being filled with outgroups (because of the absolutist perspective) and these outgroups as being immoral (because of the moral authority of the group), it is a small step to see these outgroups as actively working against the ingroup. A focus on the threat that other groups pose to the ingroup is a very common element in the arguments made by the leaders of extremist groups (Glaser, Dixit, & Green, 2002; Post, 2003).

This dissertation will use these three elements as a definition of the psychological state of extremism. This research seeks to identify a psychological explanation of the underlying process or psychological conditions that cause the development of this state. Existing research, while contributing to our understanding of the phenomenon of extremism, has currently failed to develop an explanation that fully describes why some individuals may develop an extremist mindset while others do not, or why extremist groups may be attractive to some individuals and not to others. The current research addresses these gaps.

EXTREMISM: POPULAR USAGE VS. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFINITION

It is worth distinguishing the usage of the term extremism in this dissertation from the way it is often used in popular discourse. Most often, when the terms "extremist" or "extremist group" are used in public discourse or text (and in many academic works as well), they are referring to terrorist organizations, cults, or other groups which are defined as extremist by holding beliefs not shared by mainstream society or using methods to

advance their beliefs which are condemned by the majority. In this usage, the term "extremist" identifies the distance between the perspectives of these groups and what is seen as socially normal or acceptable. It also carries a strong negative connotation, as it's often used to refer to violent groups. This is a usage of the word extremism which is quite distinct from the psychological definition used in this dissertation. In this dissertation, the term extremism is used to refer to the specific psychological state described above. The axis on which individuals are extreme is not defined by what is considered normative by society, but rather the degree to which they are committed to their group and its goals. Because of this, it is perfectly plausible for a person defined as an extremist on this definition to behave in ways which are far from being seen as unacceptable by society. Because extremism is defined as the belief that the group is morally right, absolutely correct, and under some threat rather than by any specific doctrinal or behavioral trait, the actual visible outcomes of extremism as defined here should be strongly determined by the overt teachings of the group. Any group which has a moral element to its' organizational beliefs could potentially support an extremist alignment with the group, but the behavioral impact of this alignment is likely to be dramatically different in the case of prosocial groups such as antialcoholism organizations or religious institutions than in the case of antisocial groups such as racist organizations. Research on the relationship between anonymity and social influence has demonstrated that group norms have a powerful impact on whether the behavior associated with group affiliation is prosocial or more antisocial (Johnson & Downing, 1979), and the conception of extremism used in this study extends this work .

It is certainly the case that the psychological state of extremism described here lays the groundwork for the development of the kind of violence and radical behavior associated with the popular conception of extremist groups, and it is likely that this state is a necessary precondition for the endorsement of these violent ideologies. However, as the research on group norms and prosocial behavior illustrates, it is not the case that it is necessary and sufficient.

Much of the research discussed in this dissertation will focus on violent or antisocial extremist groups, because these are the groups which are the most visible and the most easily classified as having a large number of extremist members without direct psychological assessment of the members and also because this is what the majority of existing research has focused on. However, this should not be taken as an endorsement of the idea that all people who meet the psychological definition of extremism are inherently violent, or that these groups characterize the entire domain of extremism. The three studies presented in this dissertation underscore this difference by using affiliation with mainstream political groups as a model for extremism, a domain which rarely sparks radical or violent behavior in America.

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Chapter 2: Psychological Perspectives on Extremism

REALISTIC GROUP CONFLICT THEORY

The majority of research in social psychology on the topics of extremism or extremist behavior has focused on the question of identifying and explaining radically pro-group behavior, especially that which is directed at punishing or attacking an outgroup. Because of this, early research in extremist behavior has focused on explaining extremism in terms of group interactions, and especially focusing on those conditions that lead to group conflict (whether political/social conflict or violent conflict).

Beginning with Sherif's Robbers' Cave experiments (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961), one important thread in this research has been the question of realistic or economic conflicts. Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RGCT) (Sherif, 1966) argues that group conflicts (and from this, extremist behavior) arise from real competition between groups. In this theory, competition for resources leads to group hostility, including cognitive and attitudinal elements that support this hostility (Jackson, 1993; Zarate, Garcia, Garza, & Hitlan, 2004).

While research in RGCT has shown a connection between economic conflicts and behaviors associated with extremism, (Hovland & Sears, 1940), using it to describe the psychology of extremism at the level of the individual has not been very effective. To the extent that RGCT predicts that one individual will develop an extremist mindset, RGCT would suggest that those group members who are most aware of the competition or most personally threatened by competition with other groups should be the most

extremist. Empirical tests of this hypothesis have consistently demonstrated that this is not the case. Members of white supremacist groups in North Carolina show no more concern about their economic prospects than nonmembers (Green, Abelson, & Garnett 1999), and examinations of hate group speech on the Internet has found that racists are least likely to advocate violence in the context of economic competition between races, compared to other scenarios that focus on neighborhood integration or intermarriage (Glaser, Dixit, & Green, 2002). Research into hate group members' reasons for joining has also found that interpersonal connections, more than economic concerns, seem to drive membership in extremist organizations (Turpin-Petrosino, 2002; Ezekiel 1995; 2002).

This research strongly suggests that while RGCT is an effective predictor of the general level of tensions and conflict between groups, it is not a good explanation for the psychology of extremism. While competition may affect the conflict between two groups, it does not adequately explain why one group member may develop extremist attachments to the group, and another may not. For a full explanation of extremism, it is obvious that other mechanisms than realistic conflict must be invoked.

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

Research on group processes and intergroup tensions in general has come to similar realization that RGCT, while contributing greatly to our understanding of group processes, cannot explain everything (Brown & Capozza, 2000). Group members do not always act to ensure that their group maximizes economic rewards, but instead often prefer to maximize the difference between their group and outgroups (Tajfel, Billig,

Bundy, & Flament, 1971; Turner, Brown, & Tajfel 1979). Researchers in social identity have argued that this puzzling group dynamic can only be explained by developing a greater appreciation for the role of the self-concept and how it is affected by the groups individuals belong to. Social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) argues that individuals who are members of a group incorporate that group into their understanding of who they are. To the extent that the group members see themselves as identifying with a group, that group becomes a part of their self-identity. As a result, motivations relevant to the self, such as self-enhancement, become active at the level of the group as well as the individual self, and group members act in the service of these self-relevant motives even when such behaviors are objectively not beneficial to the individual (Turner, Brown, & Tajfel 1979).

In examining the psychology of extremism, SIT provides a perspective with the potential to resolve the gaps left by realistic group conflict theory. Research in SIT has strongly confirmed the hypothesis that identity concerns are related to many group relevant behaviors, making the suggestion that identity concerns are a part of extremist behaviors a logical extension of this work. Empirical evidence supports the idea that extremism is more related to identity-related concerns than realistic conflict. In an examination of online discussion by racists, Glaser and colleagues (Glaser, Dixit, & Green, 2002) found that racists were most likely to advocate violent action when prompted with a story about Black-White intermarriage rather than other scenarios. Also, statements advocating violence in response to many scenarios focused on the perceived distinctiveness and "purity" of the group identity. This strongly suggests that it is the

conception of the group and the group identity which drives the members of these groups to commit extremist actions, rather than any perception of economic conflict between the groups.

Research drawn from SIT therefore supports the idea that the self-concept and self-related motives are likely to play a role in explaining the psychology of extremism. However, some specific predictions that SIT makes do not adequately explain the psychology of extremism. Specifically, social identity theory proposes that the primary motivations for identifying strongly with a group are a desire for self-enhancement and, more recently, uncertainty reduction (Hogg & Terry, 2000). These motives fail to describe the development of extremism.

Research in the motivations of identification with a group has placed self-enhancement as the primary motive, suggesting that identification with high-status groups is desired for the boost in self-esteem it provides (Ellemers, Van Knippenberg, DeVries, & Wilke, 1988). This would suggest that identification and extremism should be found only in high status groups. While members of high-status groups can develop extremist behaviors in the service of protecting the status of their ingroup (Sidanious, Pratto, van Laar, & Levin, 2004), there are many examples of extremist groups organized around social groups considered to be low status (e.g. Bonney, 1977, O'Connor, 1998). One political scientist has even argued that low-status groups that are a numerical majority are the most likely groups to develop extremist ideologies (Chua, 2003). Of course, one argument is that these groups represent an attempt to make a low-status group positive in the service of self-enhancement. While this is certainly a reasonable

interpretation, it presupposes a kind of extreme identification with the group and therefore a need to make that group positive. This is an inversion of the traditional description used by social identity theory, which argues that identification is the result of enhancement rather than the other way around. This interpretation begs the question of reasons for this radical identification with the group. While many high-status groups do develop extremist leanings, enhancement alone cannot explain the existence of all extremist groups.

Research focusing on less extremist behaviors has also failed to support the idea that enhancement is the primary motive for all ingroup behavior. Even in experimental settings, people have been shown to identify strongly with low-status groups (Turner, Hogg, Turner, & Smith, 1984). A recent meta-analysis found no evidence that enhancement motives underlay discrimination against outgroups, as SIT would predict (Rubin & Hewstone, 1998). Social identity theorists have responded to these criticisms by developing the argument that uncertainty reduction may also play a role in what groups an individual becomes highly identified with. From this perspective, individuals are motivated to affiliate with groups in response to events which make them uncertain about their understanding of the world or their place in it. When group members feel uncertain about their personal feelings, beliefs, or understanding of the world, they are moved to affiliate with a group and to self-categorize, or modify their self-concept to be more in line with the prototype of the group they belong to. In doing so, they receive feedback from other group members that reassures them they are correct in their beliefs.

The uncertainty reduction hypothesis has received empirical support in laboratory settings focusing on non-extremist affiliation with groups (Grieve & Hogg, 1999; Hogg & Grieve 1999). However, there are some theoretical concerns which make uncertainty reduction an incomplete explanation for affiliation with groups, and extremism by extension. Most significantly, if uncertainty reduction itself is considered to be the prime motive, there is no direct reason why uncertainty about things such as the person's beliefs about their capacity to perform on a "NASA survival task" must be related to their affiliation with a group. Presumably, the most effective form of feedback that would reduce uncertainty about things such as intellectual ability would be feedback about intellectual ability, not group membership. Categorization theorists argue that it is the salience of a particular group at the moment of uncertainty that makes that group likely to be seized upon as a tool for uncertainty reduction (Hogg & Terry, 2000), but do not adequately explain why the group, rather than behavior focused specifically upon the domain of uncertainty, should be the preferred source for uncertainty reduction.

This problem is particularly pointed when looking at the psychology of extremism. There is some evidence that people who are insecure about their social standing or uncertain about the way they see themselves are more likely to join extremist groups such as Neo-Nazi or racist organizations (Turpin-Petrosino, 2002). However, the relatively low prevalence and extremely low status of extremist groups in America provides a problem to the uncertainty reduction hypothesis as it is currently framed. If uncertainty-caused group affiliation and categorization is focused on those groups which are salient at the moment of uncertainty, then the likelihood of an individual being

attracted to a specific extremist group should exactly correlate with the likelihood of that group being salient and active at the point of uncertainty. This in turn strongly implies that it is unlikely that people should seek out groups for the purpose of joining, but instead focus on whatever groups they already belong to, as these groups are much more likely to be a salient and immediate avenue to reduce uncertainty. Studies of extremist groups find that while some people are recruited, often members of these groups seek these groups out and actively work to join groups that they may not have had any interaction with. An example of this can be seen in the Internet presence of neo-Nazi groups, which has posed a serious threat for law enforcement. Many people committing racially motivated attacks are people who sought out affiliation with extremist groups online, choosing to affiliate with these groups without ever being approached by a physical recruiter (Levin, 2002). From the perspective of uncertainty reduction as a simple motive, it is difficult to explain how these distant groups could be seen as a relevant source for uncertainty reduction.

The current state of the research, then, is that there is evidence that extremism is an outgrowth of the way a group member constructs his or her identity. Something about the way that the group member sees their membership in the group, and the way that this group membership is seen in relation to the general identity of the individual, supports the characteristics that define the psychology of extremism. The specific construction of identity related to extremist attitudes and the underlying motivation that would lead an individual to affiliate so strongly with a group are currently unknown. Explanations that

seek to seat extremism in motivations of self-enhancement or uncertainty reduction in the broad definition are unable to account for the observed cases of extremist attitudes.

Chapter 3: Self-Verification: A New Social Motive?

One potential explanation for the current state of affairs can be found in the fact that theories relating to social identity have failed to fully appreciate the full range of human social motives. The strength of SIT was that it allowed researchers to look at social behavior and identification with social groups through the lens of personal motives. However, when researchers in SIT and related theories have put this insight into practice, the primary motivations focused on have been only those of enhancement and uncertainty reduction. While important, these motivations are only a part of the core motives that people seek to fulfill in social situations (Fiske, 2004). By appreciating the role of other motives in social interaction, it may be possible to fill in some gaps in the existing literature on social identity.

One important social motivation that has currently remained unstudied in social identity research is self-verification, or the desire for individuals to be seen by others in the same way they see themselves (Swann, 1983; Swann, Rentfrow, & Guinn, 2003). Self-verification theory proposes that one fundamental social motive that people have is to strive to confirm their existing self-views. For both epistemic reasons (in that receiving reinforcement for your self-views reassures you that these views are correct) and pragmatic reasons (in that receiving affirmation of your self-views suggests that the affirming individual will interact with you in an appropriate manner) people should prefer social interactions and environments that verify their self-views. Research supports this prediction, in that many studies have demonstrated that when given a choice, people will

choose to interact with others who see them as they see themselves, even if that means that they are selecting interaction partners who see them quite negatively (Swann, Pelham, & Krull, 1989; Swann, Wenzlaff, & Tafarodi, 1992). Similarly, people are more likely to remain in marriages (Burke & Stets, 1999) and college roommate relationships (Swann & Pelham, 2002) when their partner gives them verifying feedback than when they do not. In all, almost twenty years of research have consistently confirmed that self-verification is an important human social motive.

SELF-VERIFICATION AS A MOTIVE FOR SOCIAL IDENTITY

Despite this research, social identity theory has not yet seriously considered the role that self-verification motives may play in shaping social self-views. Similarly, self-verification theory has historically steered mostly clear of examining social identity phenomena. This is in line with the traditional way that research has been carried out in social psychology, which has for the most part drawn a sharp distinction between the different aspects of the self concept. Research in the construction of the self has for many years drawn a distinction between the individual self, or those aspects of the self-concept which describe the person as an individual, and the social self, or those aspects of the self concept that tie a person to broader social or relational groups (James, 1890; Prentice, 2001). For the most part, these two aspects of the self-identity are assumed to be distinct, located in separate parts of the cognitive organization, and capable of being activated independently of each other (Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991). While it is acknowledged that, as both the personal and the social self are different elements of the overall self-identity there are clearly connections between the two elements (Reid &

Deaux, 1996), most research has tended to focus on one aspect of the self more than the other.

However, recent work has expanded research in self-verification to demonstrate that self-verification motives are active at the level of the social self as well as the personal self. When given a chance, people indicate a strong preference for interacting with those who share their image of the groups that they belong to and provide feedback that supports the way that they see these groups (Chen, Chen, & Shaw, 2004; Gomez, Seyle, Morales, & Swann, 2005). This work proves that self-verification motives include the entirety of the self concept, and also that social identities are relevant to self-verification motives. This extension of self-verification theory to collective levels of the self-concept provides an important and novel way of examining the interaction between the personal and social self, and gives new ways of looking at the psychology of extreme behaviors. This is because research which shows that the social levels of self-definition are relevant to self-verification raises the interesting question of how motives acting at the level of the personal and the social self should interact. If people desire verification for both their personal and their social self-views, then any given situation has the potential to speak to the verification needs at the personal level, at the social level, or at both levels. An obvious prediction from this is that people will prefer situations which support as many types of self-verification as possible. By preference, people should select and elect to remain in those situations where they can receive feedback that verifies both their personal and their social selves (Swann, Polzer, Seyle, & Ko, 2004; Seyle & Swann, 2005).

In many situations, it may not be possible to receive verification for both personal and social self-views. Verification of the personal self-views means verifying the self-view of the idiosyncratic elements that make up the self-concept. Unless these elements overlap to a great degree with the group prototype (the expected characteristics of a typical group member), verification of the personal self-view means pointing out the ways in which a group member is different from the average member of the group. This type of focus on the individual characteristics distances the person from the group (Brewer, 1991), and is at odds with the kind of close alignment with the group prototype that research predicts is an important determinant of connection to the group (Hogg, Cooper-Shaw, & Holzworth, 1993; Hogg & Hardie, 1991), suggesting that in many cases receiving verification for the personal self-views will actually challenge the social self-views by showing the way the person is not connected to the group.

Note that this is not necessarily the case in all situations. The desire for verification of the personal self-view and verification of the social self-views are only at odds when the personal self-views make the person stand out as distinct from the group. To the extent that a group member's personal self-views are in line with what is expected from group members, this is not the case. If the person's self-views are, in fact, similar to what people expect from a member of their group, then seeking verification for their personal self-views need not individuate them and increase their distance from the group. In fact, to the degree to which an individual's personal self-views contain attributes expected of the typical group member, efforts to receive verification for personal self-views will serve to point out how similar this person is to the prototype of the group. In

this case, verification for the personal self-views will actually serve to support the social self-views as well. For example, a proud intellectual who joins a chess club will most likely be very pleased with information that confirms that he has the attributes of a typical chess player, as those attributes (intellectual ability, a certain lack of athletic skills) are already a part of his existing self-views. On the other hand, an enthusiastic jock joining the same club will be less likely to seek out verification of his social self-view as a member of the club even if he enjoys chess, as doing so may challenge his existing self-view as an athletic person.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SELF-VIEWS

If people desire verification for both their personal and social self-views, and the degree of overlap between their personal self-view and the social prototype of the groups they belong to mediates their ability to receive verification for both levels of identity at the same time, then several predictions may be made from this. First, it can be assumed that people will be most attracted and most committed to those groups which share social prototype in line with the way they see themselves. Because social groups carry information about the individuals who join them, and can be seen as one of the identity cues that people consciously and unconsciously create to display the way they see themselves (e.g. Gosling, Ko, Mannarelli & Morris, 2002). Because a greater degree of overlap between their personal self-views and the social prototype of the group means that a greater proportion of the personal self-views can be verified without challenging the social self-view, the more the overlap, the more attractive that group will be. Moreover, this greater overlap means that feedback that confirms the personal self-views

will serve to point out how much like the group a person is, while feedback that reassures that person about their group membership will affirm that they have the characteristics expected of group members and in doing so support their personal self-views. Because of this, personal and social self-verification motives will be working in tandem to tie people to these groups (Swann, Polzer, Seyle, & Ko, 2004).

This prediction is similar to predictions made by self-categorization theory (Turner, 1985), which argues that the degree of overlap between the personal self-view and the social prototype of the group determines the extent to which someone will be a valued member of a group (e.g. Hogg & Hardie, 1991, 1992; Hogg, Cooper-Shaw, & Holzworth, 1993). However, self-categorization theory argues that this is the result of a natural cognitive process occurring in groups that has nothing to do with the personal self-view, as interacting in these group settings leads to an activation of the social prototype and a shift away from the personal self. In this viewpoint, the overlap between personal and social self-view has more to do with the success or failure of the categorization process than any motivation acting at the level of the personal self. Theories based in self-verification motivations expand this hypothesis by pointing out the ways that such personal motivations may actually support the selection of groups, and help or hinder any purely cognitive categorization processes that do exist.

The second prediction that can be made from the interaction between verification motives at the personal and social level is that people will be most satisfied with feedback that provides a balance of verification of personal and social self-views, rather than focusing on one alone. Research into optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991)

supports the prediction that most people will prefer balanced feedback that supports both elements of their personal and social self-views. Optimal distinctiveness theory argues that people have competing needs for individuality and affiliation with groups, and that these needs are in a process of constant negotiation. When the equilibrium between these two needs is breached by feedback that emphasizes either similarity with or differentiation from the social prototype, people move to restore this balance by either emphasizing their unique characteristics or their similarity with the group (Hornsey & Hogg, 1999; Pickett & Brewer, 2001). From a self-verification perspective, these results are unsurprising, as any feedback which stresses how similar an individual is to a group that they belong to must necessarily be challenging to the personal self-view, unless that group is perfectly aligned with the personal self-view. Similarly, any feedback which verifies any personal self-view which is distinct from that which is expected from the group member must appear as threatening to their social identity. The result is that, in addition to the drives for affiliation and distinctiveness hypothesized by Brewer, self-verification motives will act in most situations to reinforce a desire to be seen as similar, but not completely like, the social groups which people belong to.

This second prediction has an important corollary, though. While optimal distinctiveness theory argues that people will always seek to be distinct from the group to some degree, self-verification theory predicts that people will only seek to be distinct from the group to the extent that their existing personal self-view is different from the social prototype of the group. If someone discovered a group that had a social prototype which completely overlapped with the way they saw themselves, self-verification

motivations would predict that that person would seek to align themselves completely with that group. If they were successful in joining that group, then motivations for both personal and social verification could be satisfied at the same time. In that case, these groups would become extremely attractive to the group members (Swann, Polzer, Seyle, & Ko 2004).

Taken as a whole, self-verification motives suggest that people seek groups which have a social prototype in line with the way they see themselves. The greater the degree of overlap between the personal and social identity, the greater the attraction to the group. The most verifying group, it can be seen, is one in which there is a complete overlap between the personal and the social self-views. Such groups may be extremely powerful in the psychology of the group members, and it is in this kind of overlap that a psychological explanation of extremism may be found. As will be seen, when this kind of overlap is coupled with a strong need for verification, the result may be extremism.

Chapter 4: Identity Fusion: Definition and Predictions

Self-verification theory therefore proposes that the degree of overlap between the personal self-views and the social stereotype of a particular group is an extremely important predictor of the attraction and importance of a given group to its members or prospective members. In the most extreme form of this overlap, a group member may see their self-identity as overlapping completely with the social prototype of a group that they belong to. That is, whether because their identity is shaped to be so, or because they found a group which they fit perfectly, the group member may see their personal self-view as containing all those attributes which are expected from a group member and only those attributes. The overlap between the way they see the social prototype of the group they belong to and their personal self-views is total. In this case, there is little to distinguish between the personal self-views, or those attributes which describe the person as an individual, and the social self-views, or those aspects that tie the person to a group. Both contain the same set of attributes. This state is termed identity fusion, as it can be considered a state in which the distinction between the personal, individual identity and the group becomes difficult to identify. If the personal self-view overlaps completely with the social self-view, then activating one without making the other salient may be impossible. The result is that, for all intents and purposes, the way that the individual sees him or herself is always filtered through the social self-view. To such a person, the question "who are you" has only one real answer: a member of the group, with the characteristics associated with such group membership.

This dissertation proposes that this state, the state of identity fusion, may contribute to the phenomenon of group extremism. Through a radical alignment with the group, so that the group member sees his personal self-views as being completely in line with the group membership, the group can become a dominant part of the self-view. The results that may be predicted from this fit quite neatly with the existing research on the elements of extremism, supporting the idea that extremism may have fusion as an important component and providing theoretical answers to some existing holes in the theory of extremism.

IDENTITY FUSION AND EXTREMISM: THEORETICAL LINKS

The identity fusion model provides a theoretical underpinning to explain the three defining elements of extremism: belief that the group is morally right, belief that the group is absolutely correct, and belief that the group is opposed by active outgroups. In the first case, the belief that the group is endowed with moral authority can be explained as an outgrowth of the fusing of personal and social identities. Research suggests that for most, if not all people, the conception of the self as a moral person (in the sense that the individual understands and engages in "right" behavior in the world) is an important part of the self-identity (Hart, Atkins, & Ford, 1998; Möller & Savyon, 2003; Lewis, 2003; Aquino & Reed, 2002). Even people who have engaged in violent or criminal actions often construct a narrative about their behavior that either explains it as a brief deviation from an otherwise moral life, or justifies the behavior in moral terms (Presser, 2004). As a result, when the group becomes a significant element of the self-definition, there will be a strong desire to see the group as morally correct in its teachings. If the group member

desires to see themselves as moral, and sees the group as being a primary element of who they are, then they will be strongly motivated to see the group as moral.

In the second defining characteristic of extremism, the tendency to see the group as absolutely correct, verification motives are implicated. Most groups have a set of shared beliefs, practices, or norms that identify them as a group and define them as a collective (Horne, 2001). One of the things that membership in these groups means is the adoption of these beliefs or norms. For a fused person, any variation in these norms or deviation from the expected behavior could be construed as a challenge to the social self. Because belonging to the group means believing or behaving in a particular way, then any behavior or belief that is not in line with these expected elements is something which distinguishes the person from the group. This, in turn, is a threat to the existing self-view. For most people, some deviation from the social prototype is perfectly acceptable, as most people are engaged in the balancing act between the personal and the social self-view. For a fused person, however, this would be a threat to their existing self-views, and because of verification motives would be unwelcome feedback. The result is that fused people will adopt the entire catalogue of behaviors associated with the group, and will not wish to deviate from it in any way.

The third defining element of extremism, the tendency to believe that the group is opposed by other groups, is an outgrowth of the interaction of the first two elements with other effects of identification with the group. People who are highly identified with a group draw a strong distinction between the ingroup and the outgroup (Tajfel, 1982; Mummendy & Schreiber, 1983). When this is coupled with the absolutist elements of

extremism (that mean that any deviation from the teaching of the groups is enough to mark a group as an outgroup) and the moral elements (that make outgroups at best questionably moral groups), this means that the fused person sees the world as populated by immoral outgroups. Given that the behavior of such outgroups tends to be ascribed to negative or malevolent motives (Brewer, 1999), the result is that any attempt to support any agenda other than that advanced by the ingroup may be seen as an actual attack on the ingroup.

The identity fusion perspective, then, provides a single theoretical viewpoint which may adequately explain the psychological underpinnings of the elements of extremism. This is an important first step in establishing the relationship between extremism and identity fusion. Fusion does not predict anything at odds with the observed elements of extremism, and in fact provides a theoretical explanation that ties these existing elements together into one related construct. Additional evidence for the relationship between fusion and extremism comes in the fact that identity fusion addresses gaps in the existing theoretical explanations of extremism.

GAPS IN THE EXISTING LITERATURE

The review of current theories of extremism demonstrated that, while identity is clearly implicated in the psychology of extremism, existing theories of self and social identity are not effective at explaining extremism. Social identity theory and self-categorization theory, the two primary theories in this domain, fail to provide a motivational argument which successfully fits with observed effects. Self-enhancement, the master motive of social identity theory, cannot explain the way that people develop

extremist attitudes towards low-status groups. The identity fusion approach resolves this issue by seating the development of extremism primarily in the need for self-verification. While many people, having positive self-views, would prefer to align themselves with groups that are positive, verification theory would predict that all that is really necessary is that the group provides an overlap with the way that the people see themselves already. In this way, extremist groups associated with low-status groups are quite understandable, if these groups provide a way for people to reaffirm specific elements of their self-concept.

The second gap in the existing literature has to do with the second hypothesized motivation, uncertainty reduction. Uncertainty reduction, as it is described in the literature today, does not provide a theoretical explanation why any specific group will be more attractive or useful in the reduction of uncertainty than another. A theory of identity fusion rooted in self-verification addresses this gap by providing specific predictions for which groups will be desired in conditions of uncertainty. Only those groups which provide a way to reaffirm the existing self-view will be attractive to the uncertain individual. This prediction is supported by research showing that self-group overlap is an important predictor of attrition in the first year following joining the military, a situation in which there is both uncertainty and a very salient social group (Mael & Ashforth, 1995). While traditional theories of uncertainty reduction cannot explain this fact, verification and identity fusion provide a theoretical explanation that may fit with the existing data.

In general, current theories of the social identity elements of extremism focus primarily on a limited set of human social motives, and as a result are unable to explain the entirety of the psychology of extremism. Verification motives in general, and the concept of identity fusion in particular, provide an important counterpoint to existing theories. The fact that identity fusion provides a way to address these gaps in existing theories strongly suggests that fusion may be a part of the extremist mindset.

IDENTITY FUSION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF EXTREMISM

Any theory which sets out to explain the psychology of extremism should also attempt to develop a model that describes the development of the extremist mindset as well. Identity fusion, based in self-verification, suggests that there are three primary ways that the radical self-group overlap that defines fusion can occur: the individual may discover a group whose social prototype completely overlaps the existing self-views, the social prototype can change so that overlap occurs, or the personal self-views can change so that overlap occurs. Research in extremism supports the prediction that there are relationships between the ways that verification motives would predict fusion could come about and the way that extremists develop alignments with the groups they belong to

Pathways to identity fusion

The first way in which a group member may develop a fused identity is that the individual may have a fully constructed personal identity which includes a set of important, certain, and central self-views that happen to overlap with the social prototype of an existing group. This is unlikely, however, as it is doubtful that most people will

have a personal self-concept in which all those elements of the self-view that are most important overlap completely with an existing group. Most people's self-concepts are complex and multifaceted, with a variety of (occasionally contradictory) self-views (Linville, 1985; 1987; Woolfolk, Gara, Allen, & Beaver, 2004), and it is highly improbable that random chance will lead to someone developing a set of self-views which significantly overlap the social prototype of a group.

The second way that fusion may develop is if a member of a group shapes the collective identity of the group they belong to in order to make it a reflection of their personal self-views. Those people in a position to affect the social prototype of a group by determining who joins the group or by changing the public image of the group may change the group to be more in line with how they see themselves. Research shows that it is possible to change the social prototype of a group (Sherman, 1996), so this pathway is a possibility. However, this option is not open to most members of a group, as they are not likely to have enough influence in the way that the group is seen publicly to affect the social prototype of the group.

The third way that people may become aligned with a group to the point of fusion is if the individual shifts his personal self-view to be in line with the group. This shift in identity is a common sight in many groups characterized by high commitment to the group. Many groups that are marked by the kind of total alignment with the group that may characterize identity fusion, such as the military, are characterized by a period of induction or hazing in which the new members of the group are exposed to physical or emotional stressors, lack of sleep, or other pressures designed to shock their system and

challenge their existing personal identities, then rebuild the identity around the idealized view of the group (Dornbusch, 1955; Linhares de Albuquerque & Paes-Machado, 2004). The result is that successful recruits come out of the initiation process very closely aligned with the group and its social prototype, with a new set of personal self-views that incorporates the desired qualities of the group members. A recent chapter (Postmes, Baray, Haslam, Morton, & Swaab, 2005) argued that a similar effect is found in groups whose ideology or culture places that group in the position of commenting on or completely controlling all the elements of a member's behavior, such as many fundamentalist religious groups. In such a case, the continual salience of the group exerts a strong pressure on the member to change their personal self-views to be brought into line with the social prototype.

At its surface, this form of challenge and rebuilding of the personal and social self-views may appear to conflict with the research on verification motives, in that it shows that identity is amenable to manipulation by the situation. When these phenomena are examined in more detail, however, it becomes clear that this research is not a challenge to the theory of self-verification. In fact, verification motives may be a central part of the effectiveness of this reconstruction of the self-identity. Self-verification argues that those aspects of the self-view that are most certain are the primary focus of verification motivations (Swann & Ely, 1984). In self-views that are less certain, verification motives are less strong, and can be overridden by other situational motives such as a desire to be seen as having whatever attributes are most useful for a particular situation (Bosson & Swann, 2001). This means that some aspects of the self may be

malleable and more open to adaptation to the situation, while those core elements of the self-description, and those aspects of the self-view that the individual is most certain about, are not.

Applying this to groups which include a strong attempt to change the self-identity gives us a theoretical lens to look at how the process of identity change may come about. The aspects of hazing and initiation rituals which challenge the identity of the new inductees, such as physical and emotional pressures that emphasize the fact that their new environment is radically different from the one they have left or a strong restriction in their abilities to display their personal identities through channels such as dress or haircut (which have been shown to be an important element of displays of personal identity - see Pratt & Rafeli, 1997) serve to provide a strong challenge to the individual's existing self-views. The inductee is told that his self-views are incorrect, and prevented from many behaviors normally used to reinforce the existing self-views, creating a strong challenge to the self. At the same time that these verification needs are evoked, the group provides the new social identity as a way of providing self-verification, in that it reassures the inductees that to belong to the group is to have a particular set of relevant attributes. To the extent that the presented attributes are in line with the challenged self-views, the group should be seen as very attractive and the new group members should enthusiastically adopt the new social identity. As a part of this adoption, elements of the self-identity which are not certain or are not important may change to be brought into line with the attributes expected from the new social identity.

The utility of this process for meeting self-verification needs is only true if the social identity provides a channel for verification of more central and certain self-views. If the group's social prototype includes an expectation that group members have attributes that are very distinct from the way in which the new recruit sees him or herself, then the social group will not be a very effective source of self-verification, and it is unlikely that new group members would be motivated to stay very long with the group or align themselves with the new social identity. An example of this can be seen in the case of a new recruit who has joined the navy. The navy includes an expectation of its seamen that they be tough, bright, resourceful, and extremely organized. During the period of induction in which the new recruit is exposed to pressures that challenge her self-view, if that recruit has a highly central and certain view of herself as a tough, bright, and resourceful person, but an uncertain view of herself as disorganized, the likely result is that she will align with the navy identity as a source of self-verification, and as a result adopt a perspective of herself as highly organized. If, on the other hand, the recruit has a highly central and certain view of herself as disorganized and unresourceful, then the navy will be an unappealing social identity, and it is unlikely that she will be able to successfully adopt the new social identity she is presented with. With no solid recourse for verification strivings, it is unlikely that the new recruit will greatly enjoy or commit strongly to the navy as a social identity.

Research on organizational selection and retention supports this prediction. People who elect to join US military academies and enlist in the armed services change in some elements of their self-views, but also report significantly more overlap between the

way they see themselves and the social identities of the armed forces than the general population do even before the initiation process (Stevens & Rosa, 1994; Bachman, Freedman-Doan, Segal, & O'Malley, 2000). Moreover, a strong predictor of whether new recruits in the US army drop out early in their career is the extent to which the recruit endorsed, before he or she entered the army, attributes strongly associated with the army's social identity. Those people who before going through induction into the army see themselves as resourceful, athletic, and interdependent (all elements of the social prototype of the soldier as presented in induction) are much more likely to remain in the armed forces than people with other self-views (Mael & Ashforth, 1995). So, even in the case of organizations such as the military, where the change in the identity from civilian to the military values and identity has long been considered an important element of identification with the group (Dornbusch, 1955), self-verification motives appear to be quite active.

Pathways to extremism

If identity fusion is related to the psychology of extremism, then the pathways to fusion should be evident in the development of extremist mindsets. While it is possible that the first two paths to fusion are related to extremism, the relative rarity of the precursor situations for these to suggests that the greatest evidence should be found for the third path. The most likely situation leading to fusion will be one in which an individual receives a challenge to their existing self-identity, then is offered a chance to join a social group which includes a social prototype offering verification for the existing

self-view. If identity fusion is related to extremism, research on the development of extremism should show similar elements.

Research on recruitment into extremist groups shows that something very similar is often observed in an individual's decision to join extremist groups. One of the most common descriptions of people motivated to join extremist groups such as white power groups or religious cults is an insecure or uncertain sense of who they are (Turpin-Petrosino, 2002; Curtis & Curtis, 1993). These people are entranced by groups that affirm particular beliefs about themselves that they may not have had strong support for previously, such as a belief that they are strong or important individuals (Ezekiel, 1995; 2002). One researcher has suggested that the political or general goal of the group is unimportant, and that as long as the group provides an outlet that supports the individuals' needs for social interaction and membership in a group that sustains the way they would like to be seen, the potential extremist may just as happily join a radical environmental or animal rights group as a racist organization (Ezekiel, 2002). This is only true, of course, to the extent that the beliefs or social identity of the new group does not threaten the existing identity. Writing about the development of cults and totalist religious movements, Hardin & Kehrer (1982) argued that the most important element that would cause a new member to reject the group was the degree to which "the individual views his identity as being jeopardized by the new belief system" (pg 268).

In self-verification terms, people who are not receiving sufficient verification from their social groups or surroundings are attracted to those groups which affirm the way they see themselves, and offer new ways of supporting their self-views. If the

specific beliefs and social identity of the group they join are not excessively removed from their existing self-views, then they will quickly adopt those beliefs and behaviors as a way of identifying more closely with the group. While the lack of verification and social connection studied is often chronic, there is evidence to suggest that it may be situational, as well. The personal histories of many of the September 11th hijackers follow path that demonstrates this: they were well-educated young men from well-off families in Morrocco, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates who moved to Germany to study. Most were religious, but not excessively so prior to this move. While studying, they became homesick and lonely, and developed ties to an extremist mosque that preached a hard-line version of Islam. This mosque provided affirmation of their self-views as Muslims, social ties with other Muslims, and encouraged them to develop radical identification with the group. From this affiliation with the Islamist cause, they moved on to officially join al Qaeda and the global jihad (Sageman, 2004).

The movement away from home and the social networks it represents appears to have played an important role in the development of the extremist affiliation of the 9/11 terrorists. Germany represented a new world, in which they knew very few people. While it is certainly the case that this is stressful for other reasons than the challenge it brings to the self-identity, it is nevertheless likely that this move was a strong shock to their existing self-views. Without an existing social network to provide verifying feedback, or the familiar cues of self-identity that allowed the affirmation of the self-view as a Muslim, or a Moroccan, or other self-views, the future hijackers were in much the same boat as a new recruit to the military, cast into a strange world that was dramatically

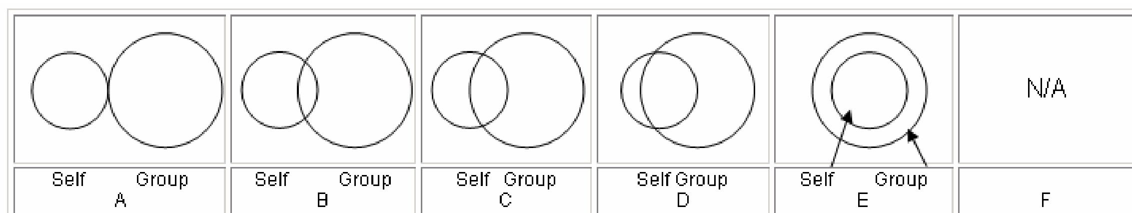
different from their usual context. And like new recruits to the military, when they were offered a chance to join a social group that contained affirmations of their existing self-views, they quickly adopted that social identity as a central part of who they were.

This role of identification with a group, coupled with uncertainty, is a prevailing strain in research on the development of extremist mindsets. Research on terrorist groups in general stresses the importance of the existing self-views in creating the attraction of a specific group for a potential recruit, whether that is an existing affiliation with a group that is focused on as a moral and righteous affiliation (White, 2001), or a personal self-view of religiosity or adventurousness that drives a recruit towards a group associated with these self-views (Post, 2005). The identity fusion formulation and its root motivation of self-verification, provides a theoretical explanation for why this may be, and suggests a clear prediction about what would make one member of any given group more attracted to an extremist identification with the group than another. To the extent to which a self-view is certain, and that self-view is represented in a particular group, then that group will be attractive when the individual's self-view is threatened. If there is a great deal of overlap, or the individual does not have a large set of certain, stable self-views, then the person may fuse with the group. From this position, he or she will be predisposed towards an extremist mindset towards the group. If the group itself encourages this mindset (through a deliberate adoption of moral authority or a norm of absolute alignment with the group), as most extremist groups do, then this predisposition is even more likely to result in a fused identity.

Empirical research in identity fusion and extremism

Identity fusion is a new and developing construct. Existing research in identity fusion has focused on developing and validating a scale to assess fusion and associating this scale with strongly pro-group behavior. This work has demonstrated that a measure of identity fusion adapted from Aron's work on graphical measurement of the inclusion of close others in the self-concept (e.g. Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991) is an effective predictor of strongly pro-group behavior both in the US (Seyle & Swann, 2005) and in Spain (Swann, Seyle, Gomez, Morales, & Huici, 2007). This scale is shown in Figure 4.1. Participants identified as fused (defined as a response of "E" on the identity fusion questionnaire in Swann et al. 2007 and "D" or "E" in Seyle & Swann 2005 – see Appendix A) report significantly more willingness to sacrifice and fight for the group. Moreover, when fused participants have their verification needs evoked by feedback targeting the personal self, these effects increase, suggesting that there is a connection between the personal self and the social self in fused participants. Additional tests of the identity fusion scale have found that it effectively predicts responses to measures of religious fundamentalism even when controlling for behavioral religiosity (Seyle & Swann, 2005). Collectively, this research supports the argument that identity fusion as measured by the identity fusion scale is an effective predictor of pro-group behavior. This provides some support for the proposal that identity fusion may be an effective model for the psychology of extremism.

Figure 4.1: Identity fusion scale (Swann, Seyle, Gomez, Morales, & Huici, 2007)



CURRENT RESEARCH

Taken as a whole, identity fusion offers a perspective which fills an important gap in the psychology of extremism. Predictions from the identity fusion formulation about the description and development of the fused identity provide an explanation for the defining characteristics of extremist beliefs and accurately describe the observed phenomena of induction into extremist groups or extremist ideologies. Identity fusion provides a theory that addresses existing gaps in the literature, in that it provides a motivational explanation that predicts when and in what circumstances people will be attracted to extremist beliefs. Furthermore, identity fusion provides a theoretical explanation for the characteristics of extremism that make the extremist mindset such a powerful phenomenon. In all, it is very likely that identity fusion can provide an important window into the psychology of extremists. The remainder of this dissertation focuses on empirical tests of the overall hypothesis that identity fusion underlies the psychology of extremism.

Three studies were conducted which examined the existence of a fusion-extremism link, the motivational underpinnings of fusion, and the cognitive consequences of fusion with a group. This set of studies was designed to make three main points. First, that the development of fusion is related to a need for self-verification, and is distinct from the development of identification with the group. Second, that the kind of strong reaction to ideas opposing the group that characterizes extremism is related to identity fusion with a group. Third, that identity fusion is related to the kind of real-world extremist behaviors most likely to be seen in day-to-day life. These data collectively

explored the utility of identity fusion for explaining the psychology of extremism and the relationship between establish self-verification motives and the development of identity fusion.

Chapter 5: Study 1

Self-verification theory predicts that people will always prefer to belong to or identify with groups that have a social prototype in line with their own existing personal self-views. These groups are attractive because they directly provide verification for the personal self-views through membership in the group, as well as because they let group members interact with like-minded others. However, a strong overlap between the personal self-views and the social identity of the group may not in and of itself be sufficient for fusion. Research examining the process of radicalization that new recruits of extremist groups go through suggests that the development of powerful group alignment is a fairly extended process, not relatively quick as would be expected if mere overlap were enough to engage fusion (Sageman, 2004). One prediction, arising from research in self-verification theory, is that only if a person has a particular need for self-verification caused by either a situational or chronic lack of verifying interactions will they motivated to align with the group to the point of fusion and even then only if that group provides a strongly verifying social self-view.

This study tested the prediction that fusion with a group would be most likely to occur when verification needs were activated and participants were placed in a situation which made some social group salient. Unlike earlier theories of social identity, it was predicted that this salient social group would only be attractive if it gave participants the opportunity for self-verification (by fitting with existing self-views). Political affiliation was used to test this general prediction. The design was a 2(challenged vs. verified self-

views) x 2(group sharing vs. opposing existing self-views) experimental design in which participants were exposed to information which either confirmed or challenged their perceptions of themselves as individuals then given the chance to interact with an online group that either fit with or did not fit with existing political self-views.

There were two specific predictions made in this study. The first relates to the interaction between identification with the group and self-verification motives in general. Because social groups are one way that people can establish support for their existing self-views, social groups that support people's existing self-views should be more attractive than those that do not. Regardless of whether their self-views were challenged or verified, participants should always prefer social groups that are verifying and more quickly identify with that group. Thus, the first prediction was:

1. Participants will, regardless of challenges to their self-views, display a stronger preference for interacting with and more enjoyment of the online discussion group when placed in a group that is verifying to their self-view than those participants placed in a non-verifying group

The second prediction relates to the interaction between challenged self-views and identity fusion. If fusion is the result of verification needs, then participants who have these needs evoked by laboratory manipulations should show a greater chance of becoming fused with a salient group. This prediction should only be true if this group offers a chance to support their existing self-views, however. If the group does not

support existing self-views, then there should be no such attraction, and hence no such fusion. The specific prediction was:

2. Participants whose self-views have been challenged will be more likely to display fusion and identification with their political affiliation when placed in a discussion group which shares that affiliation, compared to participants whose self-views have been confirmed and those placed in discussion groups opposed to their affiliation.

Finally, the third prediction relates to the effects of self-certainty. Verification needs are strongest when the self-views challenged are self-views held with more certainty (Swann & Ely, 1984). People may be willing to forego verification of self-views they are unsure about, but when beliefs that are highly certain are challenged, people are particularly likely to seek out verification. Because of this, participants who are more certain about their self-views should show a stronger reaction to manipulations which evoke verification needs. If fusion is an outgrowth of verification needs, then participants who are more certain about their self-views should show the most fusion in response to activated verification needs. This prediction is:

3. Certainty will significantly mediate the relationship between verification needs and fusion such that people higher in self-certainty will show a greater likelihood of fusion with a group than people low in self-certainty when verification needs are activated and they are placed in discussion groups that share their existing political affiliation.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were recruited online through either a listing of undergraduate research studies or messages calling for volunteers posted on community volunteering and psychological research websites. Undergraduate participants received class credit, while non-student participants were entered into a drawing for a gift certificate. Only American citizens were included in the sample. Three hundred and fifty-four participants completed the study and allowed us to use their data, including 270 from the undergraduate subject pool (198 F, 70 M, 2 no information; mean age = 18.81, SD = 1.59, median age = 18) and 63 from the Internet (45 F, 18 M; mean age = 31.56, SD = 11.12, median age = 28).

Materials and Procedure

Interested respondents were directed to a website that presented the research as an examination of how people see the political groups they belong to and how people behave in online discussion. Those participants agreeing to participate were randomly assigned to a feedback condition (verifying or challenging) and a discussion group condition (sharing existing affiliation or opposed to existing affiliation). Participants then completed demographic measures including age, gender, citizenship, and a measure of political affiliation (on a scale ranging from 1 “completely conservative” to 8 “completely liberal”). Participants also completed the Self Attributes Questionnaire (Pelham & Swann, 1989), as well as a measure of the certainty of self-views (for each of

the items used in the SAQ, participants were asked to rate the certainty of their answer on a scale from 1 “not at all certain” to 10 “completely certain”).

Next, participants were introduced to the topic of the conversation, which was presented as a discussion of the performance of President Bush and asked to write a short paragraph describing themselves as an introduction to the other participants. Participants were told not to overtly identify their political affiliation in this introductory paragraph. After completing this introduction, participants were asked to read paragraphs ostensibly written by four other participants, and to rate each on the SAQ items. They were informed that while they were rating other participants, another participant would be rating them.

Following completion of their ratings, participants were presented with the verification manipulation. This was presented as feedback ostensibly given by another rater on how that person perceived the participant. The feedback was actually generated automatically based on the participant’s experimental condition. In the confirmed self-view condition, SAQ ratings were based off of the individual’s responses, with one point added to the ratings of intelligence, creativity, anger, and intolerance. In the challenged self-view condition, SAQ ratings were based on the participant’s response, but with three points subtracted from the ratings of creativity and intolerance, and two points added to the ratings of intelligence, hardworkingness, submissiveness, and anger.

In the next stage of the study, participants were presented with the discussion group manipulation. This was presented as a bulletin board with several comments on it

from various other participants. These comments were generated so that each discussion group was strongly weighted towards one perspective, with one group being primarily conservative (including comments which were overall approving of the President's administration, with some dissenters and traditionally conservative positions given as reasoning for both approving and dissenting opinions) and one group being primarily liberal (including comments that were overall opposed to the President's administration with some dissenters, and traditionally liberal reasoning given for both positions). See Appendix B for the comments.

Participants were assigned to a discussion group based on experimental condition. In the shared affiliation group condition, participants were assigned to a discussion group which mirrored their self-described political affiliation (identified by splitting the measure of affiliation such that responses of 1 through 4 were coded as liberal and 5 through 8 as conservative). In the opposing condition, participants were assigned to the opposite group. In each case, participants were asked to join into the discussion by writing a comment. After finishing this, participants were directed to a page containing the dependent measures. Degree of enjoyment of the discussion was assessed through three questions ("How much did you enjoy participating in this online discussion?", "If you had a chance to participate in this online discussion with the same group of people outside of this experiment, would you be interested?", and "If you had a chance to participate in an online discussion on a similar topic but a different group of people outside this experiment would you be interested?"), each scored 1 to 9 with 9 indicating greatest agreement. Identification and fusion with both the group "conservative" and

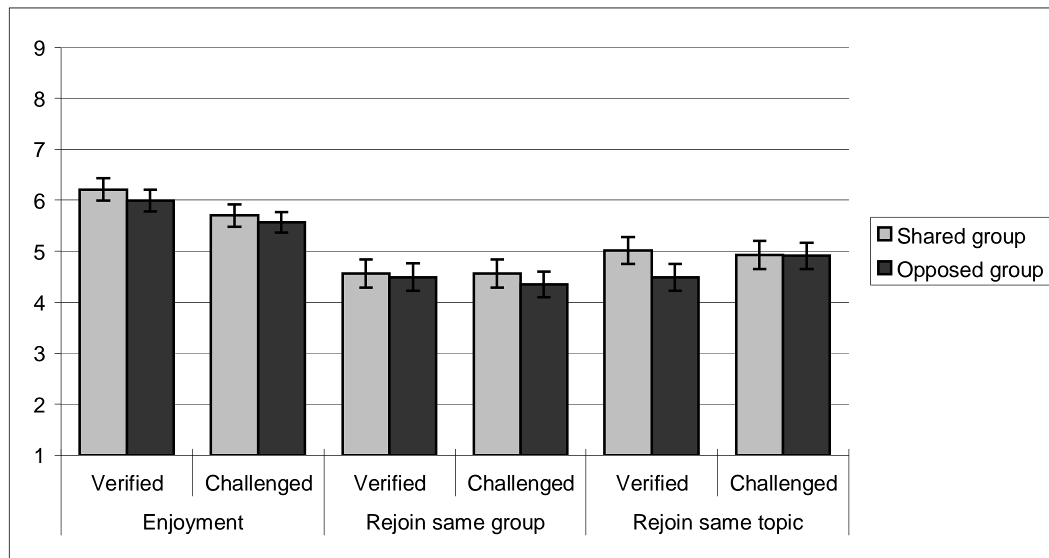
"liberal" were assessed. Identification was measured using the organizational identification questionnaire (Mael & Ashford, 1992), a five-question, validated measurement of identification with the group (sample items include items such as "I am very interested in what citizens of others countries think about my group" and "When someone praises my group, it feels like a personal compliment"). This questionnaire is a well-established measure of identification. Identity fusion was measured with the identity fusion scale (Swann, Seyle, Gomez, Morales, & Huici, 2007).

RESULTS

Response to group discussion

Participants' response to the items assessing enjoyment and willingness to continue the group discussion are shown in Figure 5.1. To test the effects of the manipulations on participants' response to the group discussion, a 2 (verification: verified or challenged) X 2 (discussion group: shared vs. opposed affiliations) MANOVA was performed with the three group discussion measures as the dependent variables. This MANOVA found no overall effect for verification ($F(3,346) = 1.843$, n.s.), discussion group ($F(3,346) = .546$, n.s.), or interaction of verification by discussion group ($F(3,346) = .194$, n.s.). However, the MANOVA tests of individual effects found that in the case of the question assessing enjoyment, there was a significant difference between verified and challenged participants ($F(3,351) = 4.518$, $p<.05$).

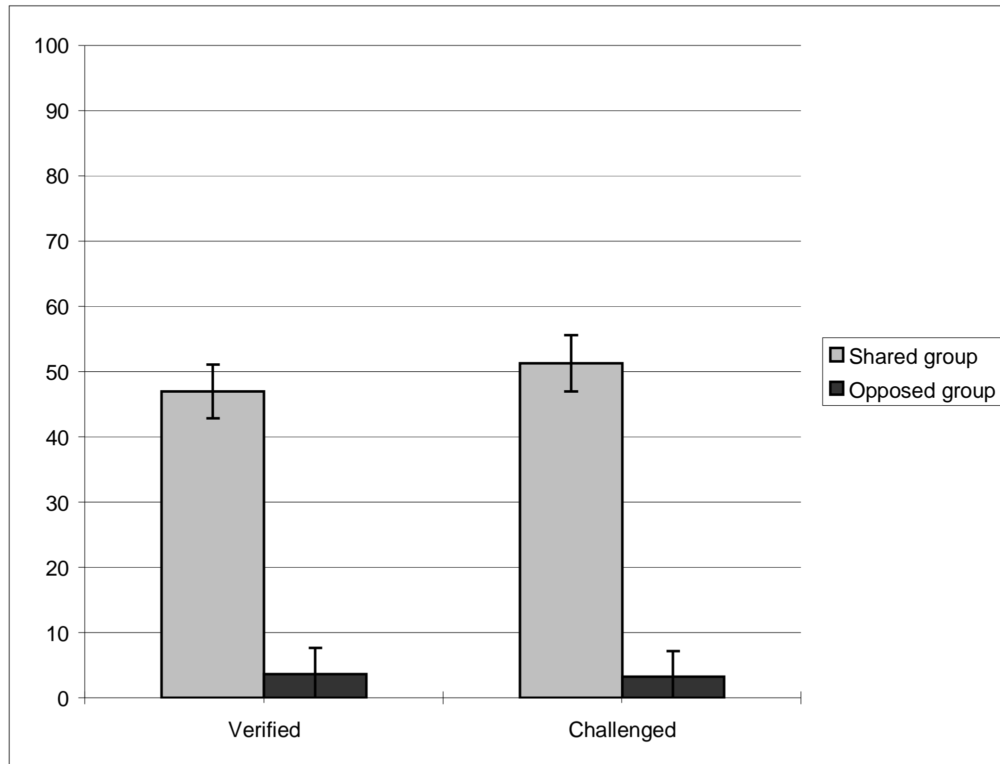
Figure 5.1: Response to group discussion



Fusion

Fusion was assessed with the identity fusion scale. Participants were defined as fused if they endorsed a response of "D" or "E" on the identity fusion scale (see Appendix A). Participants completed the identity fusion scale for both the political affiliation "liberal" and "conservative" and answers were recoded to obtain a measure of fusion with the political affiliation matching the discussion group they were placed into. Of the 333 participants who responded to this question, 84 (24%) indicated fusion with the affiliation associated with their discussion group

Figure 5.2: Percent of participants indicating fusion with affiliation matching discussion group



Because fusion was defined as a dichotomous state rather than a continuous variable, the relationship between fusion and the manipulations was tested by using binary logistic regressions. Verification (dummy-coded with the verified group as 0 and the challenged group as 1), discussion group (dummy coded with the opposed group as 0 and the shared group as 1), and the verification-by-discussion group interaction term were entered as predictors into a binary logistic regression with fusion with the affiliation matching the discussion group as the outcome measure. This analysis found no significant effect for verification (β = -.095, SE = .831, odds ratio = .909, n.s) or the verification-by-discussion group interaction (β = .269, SE = .091, odds ratio = 1.308, n.s). However, in this analysis discussion group is a significant predictor of fusion such that

participants in shared affiliation discussion groups were more likely to indicate fusion with the group (β = 3.163, SE = .628, odds ratio = 23.636, p<.001).

Following these analyses, the effects of certainty on fusion and the interaction of certainty with the manipulations was assessed. The first analysis included a series of binary logistic regressions. In step 1, verification (dummy-coded with the verified group as 0 and the challenged group as 1), discussion group (dummy coded with the opposed group as 0 and the shared group as 1), and certainty (continuous) were entered as predictors of fusion. In step 2, the verification-by-certainty interaction term, and the verification-by-discussion group interaction term were added as predictors. In step 3, the three-way interaction term was added. These found a significant effect for discussion group such that people in the shared affiliation discussion group were more likely to be fused, but no other significant effect. See Table 5.1

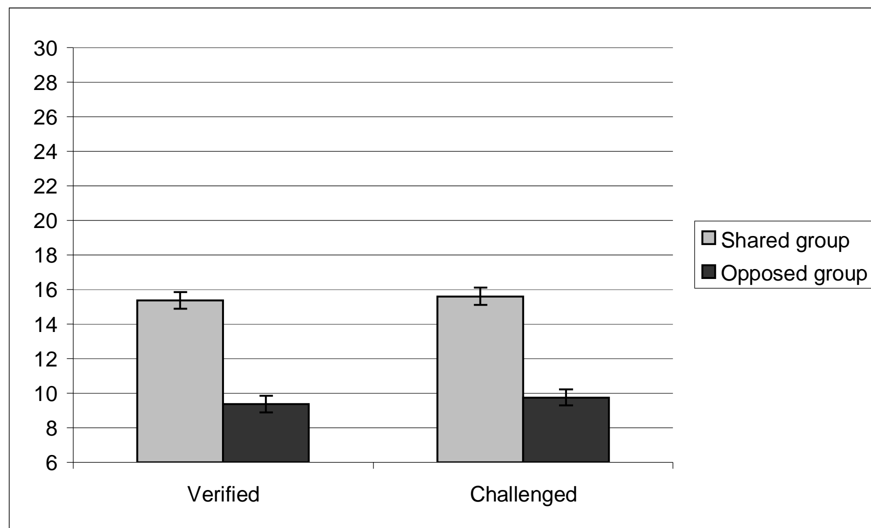
Table 5.1: Results for binary logistic regressions including certainty

	Step 1				Step 2				Step 3			
Predictor	**B**	**S.E.**	**OR**	**p**	**B**	**S.E.**	**OR**	**p**	**B**	**S.E.**	**OR**	**p**
Verification	0.101	0.299	1.106	n.s.	-0.974	1.921	0.377	n.s.	-4.302	4.672	0.014	n.s.
Discussion group	3.284	0.446	26.683	<.001	3.159	0.63	23.54	<.001	3.159	0.63	23.54	<.001
Certainty	-0.01	0.015	0.993	n.s.	-0.014	0.021	0.986	n.s.	-0.014	0.021	0.986	n.s.
Certainty by verification	-	-	-	-	0.014	0.03	1.014	n.s.	0.069	0.074	1.072	n.s.
Certainty by discussion	-	-	-	-	0.247	0.892	1.28	n.s.	3.894	4.697	49.113	n.s.
Three-way interaction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.061	0.074	0.941	n.s.

Identification

Identification was assessed as the sum of responses to the organizational identification scale (mean = 12.38, SD = 5.31). To test the relationship between the

Figure 5.3: Identification with affiliation matching discussion group



manipulations and identification, a 2(verification: verified vs. challenged) x 2(discussion group: shared vs. opposed affiliations) ANOVA was performed. This analysis found a significant difference related to discussion group such that people in the shared affiliation group showed more identification with the affiliation associated with that group (F(1, 346) = 146, p<.001) but no significant difference due to verification (F(1, 346) = .579, n.s.) or interaction between verification and discussion group F(1, 346) = .216, n.s.). See Figure 5.3.

To assess the relationship between the manipulations and self-certainty, a 2(verification: verified vs. challenged) x 2(discussion group: shared vs. opposed affiliations) ANCOVA including certainty and the certainty by verification interaction term as covariates was conducted. This ANCOVA found that the significant effect for discussion remained (F(1, 341) = 144.9, p<.001), but no other effect was significant. Verification (F(1, 341) = .322, n.s.), certainty (F(1, 341) = .199, n.s.), the verification by

discussion interaction ($F(1, 341) = .429$, n.s.), and the certainty by verification interaction ($F(1, 341) = .232$, n.s.) all failed to show significant effects.

DISCUSSION

This study was designed to test the relationship between verification and fusion, based on the argument that fusion with a group may be one way of meeting particularly pressing verification needs. The overall expectation was that participants would be most likely to display fusion with a group when their need for verifying feedback was activated and they were in an environment which made specific existing social identities salient.

Specific Predictions

There were several specific predictions made in this study. The results showed little support for these predictions.

Prediction 1:

1. Participants will, regardless of challenges to their self-views, display a stronger preference for interacting with and more enjoyment of the discussion group when placed in a group that is verifying to their self-view than those participants in non-verifying groups

One of the core predictions of this design was based on the argument that participants would enjoy and prefer to interact with discussion groups that fit with their existing political affiliation. This prediction is reasonable, because the attraction of similarity in opinions is a fundamental part of human social interaction (e.g. McPherson,

Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). However, the data from this study do not support this prediction. The multivariate analysis found no overall differences between the participants placed in shared affiliation discussion groups and the participants placed in opposed discussion groups. There are several potential explanations for this disconnect between existing theory and the data found in this study. It may be that participants in this study showed no strong preference to interact with others who shared their existing political opinions, that the items used to measure this preference were not sensitive enough, or that the specific manipulation used for intergroup discussion was not strong enough.

The first explanation is unlikely: although some participants may not show a strong preference for shared vs. opposed opinions (this may reflect a search for exposure to other opinions, or a desire to test their opinions against others), the preference for interaction with similar others is a strong and well-supported finding in social psychology (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001; Hogg, Cooper-Shaw, & Holzworth, 1993). Because the preference for interaction with others who are similar to us is so strong and pervasive a part of human social behavior, it would be very surprising if the effect is wholly absent in the current study.

The second explanation, that the preference exists but was not successfully measured, is more plausible. The items used in Study 1 to assess response to the discussion were chosen primarily to meet the criteria for face validity and were not extensively validated. However, it is not the case that these items failed entirely to identify significant differences within the sample. Participants whose received feedback

that challenged their self-views reported enjoying the discussion significantly less. Because people prefer to receive verifying information rather than nonverifying information, this is probably a carryover from the verification manipulation (which occurred immediately before the discussion began). While the predicted effects for preference for shared affiliation discussion groups did not arise, these measures did pick up on the effects of the verification manipulation. Therefore, while the idea that the measures are not sensitive enough is plausible, there is evidence that this is not wholly true.

The third explanation, that the specific manipulation used in this study may not have been strong enough to provoke strong responses, is the most likely of the three. A common question in research on computer-mediated communication is whether online discussion can be as engaging, significant, and compelling as face-to-face conversation. Although there is good evidence that online discussion can be as impactful as face-to-face discussion, this impact requires significant investment in the conversation from the members. Actual engagement in online discussion tends to develop only when there is a significant back-and-forth discussion between participants, and particularly when the conversation is composed of the same participants engaging with each other over a long period of time (Seyle, 2000). The online discussion utilized in this study probably did not elicit the level of investment required for participants to take the conversation seriously. Participants only posted once, and did not engage in any kind of back and forth conversation. This is an extremely minimal form of interaction, and may not have been significant enough to elicit the desired effects. Therefore, the most likely

explanation for these findings is that participants simply did not care enough about the conversation to show a significant difference between talking with people who shared their political opinion and people who did not. This effect is likely strengthened by the fact that the majority of the participants were younger than 25, placing them in a generation which displays strikingly low levels of political interest and engagement (Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli Carpini, 2006). These findings overall suggest that the study materials were not very impactful. While this specific prediction was not a central element of the relationship between verification and fusion, these findings raise problems for the rest of this study because they suggest the participants were not engaged with the task and may therefore not strongly react to the study.

Prediction 2:

2. Participants whose self-views have been challenged will be more likely to display fusion and identification with their political affiliation when placed in a discussion group which shares that affiliation, compared to participants whose self-views have been confirmed and those placed in discussion groups opposed to their affiliation.

This prediction is based on the argument that fusion is an outgrowth of need for verification interacting with the situational or enduring salience of specific social groups that can provide this verification. The analyses did not support this prediction: verification needs had no significant main effect or interaction with discussion groups in any analysis, showing that the verification manipulation failed to lead to a significant difference in fusion or identification.

One possible explanation for these results is related to measurement. As discussed in Appendix A, defining fusion as responses of either "D" or "E" has the problem of increasing the variance of the fused group and obscuring the existence of effects that a stricter definition of fusion may uncover. It may be significant that the mean differences for both percentage of people indicating fusion and identification with their discussion group show participants in the challenged condition endorsing the items more. It is possible that a sample which included a larger number of participants and a stricter definition of fusion would show results that exist but are obscured by the definition of fusion used in this study.

A second explanation for the lack of findings is suggested by the analyses of enjoyment of the discussion. As discussed above, it is apparent that participants were not particularly invested in this study, possibly because of the focus on political affiliations. The core argument connecting verification to fusion is that when people's needs for self-verification are activated, they are more likely to align and possibly fuse with groups that affirm their existing self-views as a source of verification. If the participants in this study were not particularly committed to their political affiliation, it may not have been seen as a social identity that could provide verification. This study may be more effective if it is replicated with groups that are particularly important to the participants in the sample even before the beginning of the experiment.

This explanation is somewhat challenged by the effects found for discussion group. The analyses found that participants placed in discussion groups sharing their existing self-views showed more fusion and identification with the affiliation after the

discussion. This suggests that for at least some participants, political affiliation is a significant enough social identity for them to indicate fusion with the group. Most likely this has little to do with the manipulation: because in the shared affiliation group condition the measure of affiliation associated with the discussion was also a measure of fusion or identification with the existing self-nominated affiliation, it's likely that the results for shared affiliation groups simply show the baserate of identification and fusion. Without the predicted interaction between verification and discussion group condition, it is difficult to conclude that these effects are attributable to the manipulation instead of reflecting the baserates in the general population. If there is an effect such that the discussion group increased fusion and identification, it is likely related in part to priming of social self-views and possibly in part to the phenomenon of group polarization (e.g. Isenberg, 1986). Participants in the shared affiliation group were placed in an environment where the majority of participants shared their political views, a context that research suggests is likely to lead to increased endorsement of their political views.

Of course, a third potential explanation for the lack of effects is that the underlying hypothesis that fusion is related to verification concerns is incorrect. While there is growing evidence that verification is active at both the personal and social levels of the self-concept (Chen, Chen, & Shaw, 2004) and earlier studies have found an association between verification needs and fusion (Swann, Seyle, Gomez, Morales, & Huici, 2007), there is as of yet not enough research on this for the question to be settled. Research carefully exploring these questions is needed before the existence of a relationship between verification concerns and fusion can be established.

Prediction 3:

3. Certainty will significantly mediate the relationship between verification needs and fusion such that people higher in certainty will show a greater likelihood of fusion with a group than people low in self-certainty when verification needs are activated and they are placed in discussion groups that share their existing political affiliation.

Past research in self-verification theory has demonstrated that people are significantly more reactive to challenges to certain, central self-views than to challenges to uncertain self-views (Swann & Ely, 1984). Because of this, if fusion is related to self-verification needs, then certainty of self-views should interact significantly with the verification prediction to predict identity fusion. Those people who are most certain and receive challenging feedback should be more likely than people less certain about their self-views to fuse with groups when they are placed in groups sharing their existing self-views. Specifically, it was predicted that verification should interact with both discussion group and certainty to predict fusion and identification with the group. This prediction was not supported by these data: neither verification nor any interaction between verification and certainty was an effective predictor of fusion in these analyses.

The lack of a relationship between certainty and verification needs in our data provides additional problems for the predicted relationship between verification and fusion. If verification were to be found to be associated with fusion, it should be found in those people with the highest self-certainty. The fact that it is not underscores the failure of this design to find any association between verification concerns and fusion. As

discussed above, the question of why this is remains an open question. It is possible that political affiliation is not seen as a source of verifying information about the self for most participants, or also possible that fusion is more closely related to other social psychological phenomena than verification.

General discussion

The primary conclusion that can be drawn from Study 1 is that the design of this study was not overwhelmingly effective. Very few participants indicated fusion with their political affiliation, and participants did not report a great deal of enjoyment of the discussion or desire to repeat the experience. Given that the majority of participants were younger than 25, this fits with existing research about the relative lack of political engagement in the younger generation. By focusing on political groups, it is likely that this design reduced the overall impact of the manipulations presented and possibly obscured the effects we hoped to find. Because of these methodological limitations, no firm conclusions can be drawn from these results.

Chapter 6: Study 2

Recent research in decisionmaking has challenged the economic model of the purely rational thinker by arguing that humans often have "sacred values" which are not amenable to rational, calculative processing (Tetlock, 2003; McGraw & Tetlock, 2005). This "Sacred Values Protection Model" argues that for some people, there are some core values which are held to be inviolate and not open for negotiation. These sacred values are argued to be functionally outside the traditional costs and benefits approach to rational decisionmaking, and research suggests that people do treat arguments associated with sacred values differently than those that do not activate these values. Participants asked to make decisions which place sacred values in competition, consider counterfactuals which challenge sacred values, or otherwise engage these values through rational and dispassionate analysis tend to respond strongly by reporting significant difficulty in making these considerations, showing significant moral outrage at the measures, and engaging in extensive reaffirmation of their sacred values following the consideration (Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000)

This research has opened fascinating new questions, but has currently failed to address an important element of this idea: what makes a value a sacred value? The research has demonstrated that many people do hold particular values to be outside of rational calculation, and that many of these are related to widespread cultural beliefs about, for example, the sanctity of human life (Tetlock et al. 2000, experiment 2). However, many others relate to things such as the religious group to which a person

belongs or specific political opinions, which are idiosyncratic personal traits not shared by the entire culture (Tetlock et al. 2000, experiments 1, 5). Although existing research has established the existence of sacred values, the work so far has not addressed why some values may become sacred to one person but not another, or what leads people towards identifying specific values as sacred.

One clue as to what may underlie the psychology of sacred values is found in the comparison of sacred values to the psychology of extremism. The observable correlates of sacred values appear very similar to the key characteristics of extremism: participants treat sacred values as absolute and report greater perceptions of people who disagree with these values as actually being inherently bad people (Tetlock et al. 2000). It is possible that sacred values represent the cognitive element of extremism. If it is the case that identity fusion is the underlying psychology of extremism, and sacred values are one expression of the state of extremism, then it follows that identity fusion may provide an explanation for the development of sacred values. If an individual is fused with a particular group, or otherwise takes a specific value or belief to be an integral part of who he or she is, then any attempt to question that belief is not simply a cognitive exercise or a harmless game of counterfactuals. Instead, it is actually a challenge to the self-view, and as such something that will cause strong rejection of the idea and attempts to reaffirm of the self-view. Seen through this light, the rejection of counterattitudinal propositions and “moral cleansing” behaviors that reaffirm group membership found as a response to these propositions make sense: these are expressions of verification concerns.

Study 2 sought to examine the relationship between identity fusion and sacred values associated with political affiliation. The overall design was a 2(political vs. nonpolitical counterfactuals) x 2(fused vs. nonfused) x 2(political affiliation: liberal vs. conservative) experimental design. There were two specific predictions in this study. The first relates to the findings of Tetlock et al.(2000), who found that people who strongly endorsed the perspective of their group (in that case, a religious organization) reacted to requests to consider counterfactuals that oppose the group's perspective with a high degree of moral outrage and moral cleansing behavior. Tetlock and colleagues argue that this demonstrates the existence of sacred values in these group members. If identity fusion is related to the development of sacred values, then the identity fusion scale should be an effective predictor of this kind of strong reactivity. Therefore, the first prediction was:

1. Identity fusion with a political affiliation will be a predictor of resistance to counterfactuals in the form of greater reported difficulty in considering these counterfactuals and more moral outrage, moral cleansing, and stronger emotional reactions following the consideration of political counterfactuals but not following the consideration of nonpolitical counterfactuals.

An important distinction between this research and Tetlock et al.'s study is that this research proposes that it is identity fusion, rather than general strength of belief or affiliation with a group, that is an important part of the development of sacred values. In Tetlock et al.'s research, the authors predicted the development of sacred values from either membership in specific groups or (in the case of religiosity) measures which asked

people to indicate the strength of their belief or identification with their religious group (e.g. the religious belief measure from Martin & Westie, 1959). In contrast, the identity fusion formulation argues that it is not so much how strongly an opinion is held or membership in a specific group that predicts the development of sacred values so much as it is the question of how the group member constructs the relationship between the group and the self. Thus, one prediction of this study was that fusion, not identification specifically, would be an important predictor of resistance to counterfactuals. Specifically, it was predicted that

2. Fusion will be an effective predictor of resistance to counterfactuals even when controlling for identification.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were recruited from undergraduate introductory psychology courses at the University of Texas as well as from postings calling for volunteer research participants on community websites and websites listing online experiments. Undergraduate participants received class credit, while non-student participants were entered into a drawing for a gift certificate. Only American citizens who indicated voting in 2004, voting in 2006 or (for those participants completing the study before November of 2006) intention to vote in 2006 were included in the analysis. One hundred ninety-five eligible participants completed the study, including 184 from the undergraduate research pool (125F, 58M, 1 declined to answer; mean age=18.5, SD=2.32; median age = 18) and

eleven from the general population of the Internet (8F, 3M; mean age=27.64, SD=9.82; median age = 28).

Materials and Procedure

Participants were directed to a website which introduced this study as an experiment how people saw political groups and how views of political groups relate to decisionmaking. After reading and initialing an informed consent page, participants were randomly assigned to a condition (political or nonpolitical counterfactuals), then completed a series of demographic questions including age, gender, American citizenship, and political affiliation (including the items "extremely liberal/progressive, moderate liberal, moderate, moderate conservative, extremely conservative, libertarian, and other"). Next, participants were given the identity fusion scale and organizational identification questionnaire (Mael & Ashford, 1992) for their self-identified political affiliation and then presented with a series of counterfactuals designed to present simple if-then statements in either political or nonpolitical framing. In each case, the counterfactual presented an argument laid out as a simple if-then designed so that the consequent in the if-then statement followed logically from the antecedent. In the political condition, counterfactuals were designed to be contrary to some stance commonly associated with either American liberalism (including counterfactuals suggesting racial profiling be used, gun control laws be weakened, and supporting the preemptive use of force) or American conservativism (including counterfactuals suggesting the government should raise taxes, support adoption in nontraditional families, and that the US not be seen as a moral nation). See Appendix C for a complete list of the

counterfactuals and measures used in this study. After each counterfactual, participants completed ratings of how easy it was to imagine that the counterfactual might be true and (leaving aside their personal feelings) how difficult it was to see the consequent of the counterfactual following the antecedent if the antecedent were true. After the eight counterfactuals, participants completed a series of measures assessing moral outrage taken from Tetlock et al. (2000) (including items which allowed participants to express their opinion of anyone who would advance these counterfactuals), emotional reaction to the counterfactuals (including anger, sorrow, disappointment, and hope), and items assessing moral cleansing (including items assessing participants' intentions to vote, donate money to a political figure, volunteer to support a candidate, and run for office). Note that the language used here to describe these constructs is taken directly from Tetlock et al.'s terminology.

RESULTS

Fusion and identification measures

One hundred and ninety-one of the one hundred and ninety-five participants completed the measure of fusion. When fusion is defined as a response of "D" or "E" on the identity fusion scale, there were 128 unfused participants and 66 fused. Rates of fusion and identification across the political affiliations are shown in Table 6.1. Identification was computed as the sum of responses to the Organizational Identification Questionnaire (mean = 13.86, SD = 4.69).

Table 6.1: Fusion and identification scores across political affiliations

Political affiliation	N	N (%) Fused	Mean identification
Extremely liberal	8	7 (87.5%)	20.25
Moderate liberal	56	17 (30.4%)	14.05
Moderate	55	21 (38.2%)	11.86
Moderate conservative	63	15 (23.8%)	13.89
Extremely conservative	9	6 (66.7%)	18.11
Libertarian	3	0 (0)	12
Total	194	66 (33.8%)	13.86

Political affiliation

Because the predictions of this study were based on the idea that fused participants will respond specifically to counterfactuals which run contrary to their political affiliation, it was necessary to create a measure of political affiliation. Because the items were designed to target liberals and conservatives, self-described moderates and libertarians were excluded from the analysis and the remaining participants were dichotomized as either liberal or conservative by collapsing the extreme and moderate levels for each group. With the moderates and libertarians excluded, the final number of participants included in the analysis was therefore 136.

Resistance

The initial analyses examined the impact of fusion on resistance to the counterfactuals. Resistance was assessed with two items, each scored 1 to 9 with 9 indicating the most resistance. The first asked how difficult it was to imagine that the counterfactual might be true, and the second asked participants their difficulty in imagining the consequent following the antecedent if the antecedent were proved to be true. Answers to these two items were highly correlated (mean r = .48) so a final

measure of resistance was computed as the mean of the two answers for each counterfactual. Finally, in order to assess participants' response across the different political frames of the counterfactual these responses were collapsed into two overall measures: one for those items framed to be contrary to liberal positions and one for those items framed to be contrary to conservative positions. This was done by calculating the mean response across all items framed in each way (items 2,4,6, and 8 for those items contrary to liberal perspectives and items 1,3, 5, and 7 for items contrary to conservative perspectives). In the nonpolitical condition an overall measure of resistance was computed by calculating the mean of responses to all eight counterfactuals. Because of an error in the data collection website, resistance data for counterfactual number 7 was not recorded and is not reported here.

Figure 6.1: Resistance to counterfactuals

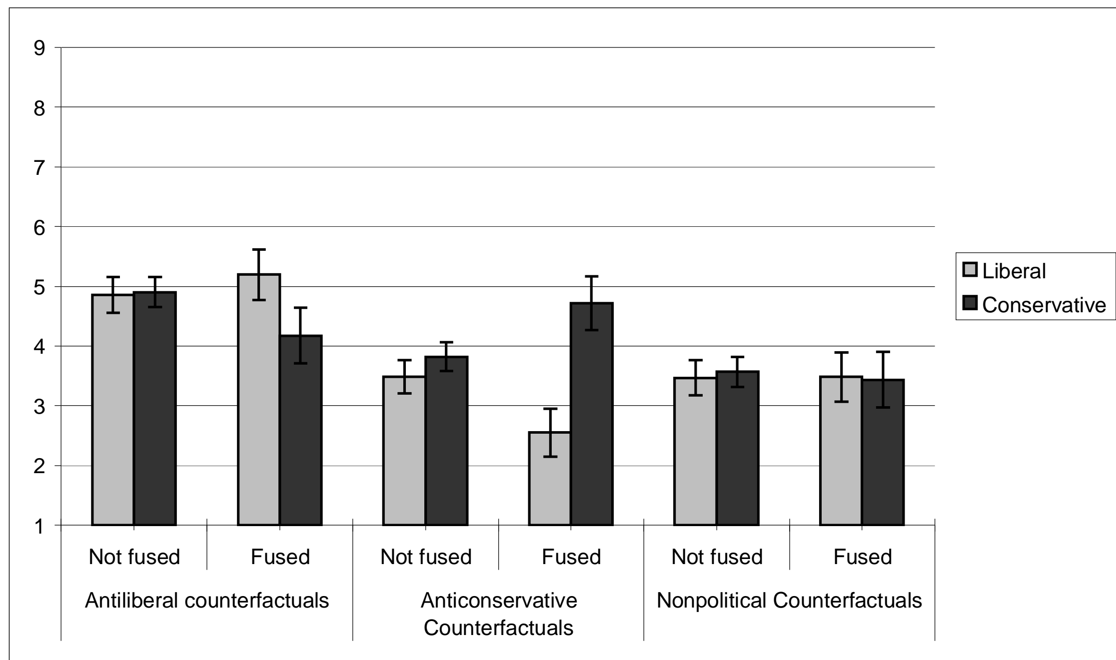


Table 6.2: ANOVA results for resistance to counterfactuals

	Antiliberal counterfactuals					Anticonservative counterfactuals					Nonpolitical counterfactuals				
Source	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**
Fusion	0.55	1	0.55	0.42	n.s.	0.01	1	0.01	0.01	n.s.	0.05	1	0.05	0.04	n.s.
Affiliation	3.46	1	3.46	2.64	n.s.	22.32	1	22.32	23.8	<.001	0.01	1	0.01	0.01	n.s.
Affiliation by fusion	4.20	1	4.20	3.21	0.078	11.95	1	11.95	12.8	<.001	0.08	1	0.08	0.07	n.s.
Error	87.80	67	1.31			61.83	66	0.94			65.00	57	1.14		
Total	1749.52	71				1022.94	70				813.42	61			

Table 6.3: ANCOVA results for resistance to counterfactuals

	Antiliberal counterfactuals					Anticonservative counterfactuals					Nonpolitical counterfactuals				
Source	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**
Identification	1.81	1	1.81	1.38	n.s.	1.60	1	1.60	1.72	n.s.	0.07	1	0.07	0.07	n.s.
Identification by affiliation	0.33	1	0.33	0.25	n.s.	2.22	1	2.22	2.38	n.s.	2.42	1	2.42	2.2	n.s.
Fusion	0.01	1	0.01	0.01	n.s.	0.00	1	0.00	0	n.s.	0.30	1	0.30	0.27	n.s.
Affiliation	1.05	1	1.05	0.8	n.s.	0.02	1	0.02	0.02	n.s.	2.32	1	2.32	2.11	n.s.
Affiliation by fusion	3.89	1	3.89	2.95	0.090	4.65	1	4.65	5	<.05	0.54	1	0.54	0.49	n.s.
Error	85.68	65	1.32			59.54	64	0.93			60.44	55	1.10		
Total	1749.52	71				1022.94	70				813.42	61			

Response to the resistance measures are shown in Figure 6.1. To test the relationship between fusion and resistance, 3 2 (fusion: fused vs. unfused) by 2 (political affiliation: liberal vs. conservative) ANOVAs were conducted including resistance to antiliberal counterfactuals, anticonservative counterfactuals, and the nonpolitical counterfactuals in separate analyses. Results for these ANOVAS are shown in Table 6.2.

These analyses revealed a fusion by affiliation interaction that was significant in response to anticonservative counterfactuals and approached significance to antiliberal counterfactuals. Participants fused with a political affiliation showed higher resistance to counterfactuals opposing that perspective and lower resistance to counterfactuals opposing the alternative perspective. For anticonservative counterfactuals, there was an

overall main effect for affiliation as well such that conservatives showed more resistance. No effects were found for the nonpolitical counterfactuals.

To determine if fusion had an effect on resistance when identification was controlled for, these ANOVAs were followed by 3 2(fusion: fused vs. unfused) by 2 (political affiliation: liberal vs. conservative) ANCOVAs with identification and the identification by affiliation interaction term (calculated by multiplying identification by affiliation with affiliation coded as liberals = 0 and conservatives = 1) entered as covariates. Results are shown in Table 6.3. When the identification covariates were included in the analysis, the results did not change significantly except that in the case of anticonservative counterfactuals affiliation was no longer an overall significant predictor. The fusion by affiliation interactions identified in the earlier ANOVA remain, although the formerly marginal effect for the antiliberal condition has moved further away from significance.

Moral Outrage

Moral outrage was assessed as agreement on a scale of 1 to 9 with four items ("This person is likely to admire people who disagree with him or her," "This person is likely to have contempt for people who disagree with him or her," "This person displays a great understanding of American history," and "I would seek out this person's company") with all items except item 1 reverse-scored. A final score for moral outrage was computed by computing mean response to the four items following the reverse scoring for each of the eight counterfactuals. As above, these were then collapsed into three separate measures for response to liberal, conservative, and nonpolitical

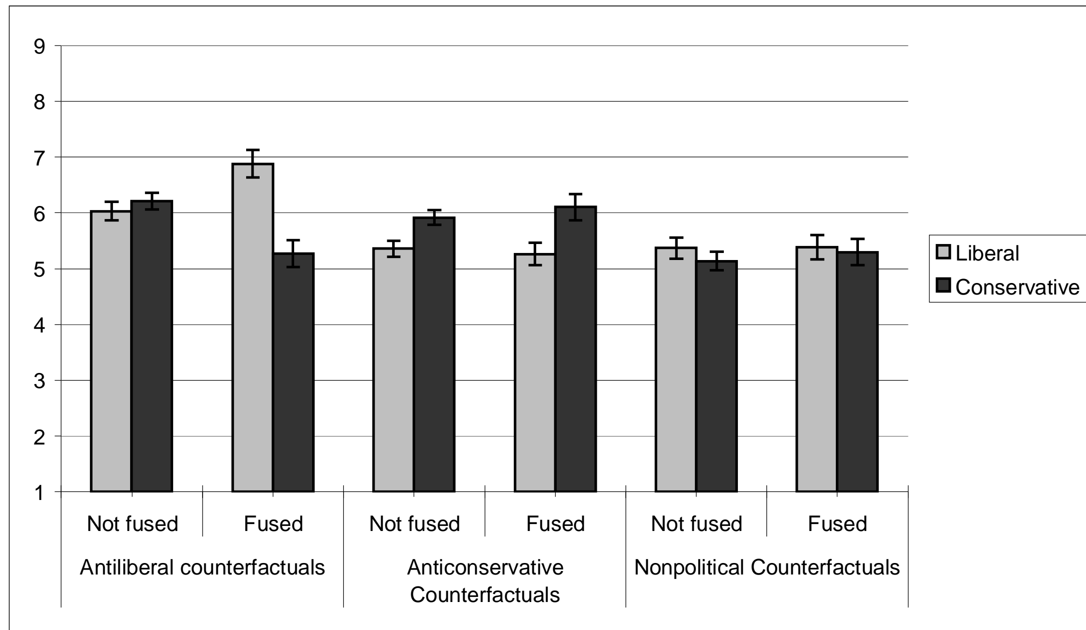
counterfactuals by computing the mean for responses to each set of counterfactuals (in the political condition, counterfactuals 2, 4, 6,and 8 for the antiliberal counterfactuals and items 1, 3, 5, and 7 for the anticonservative counterfactuals. In the nonpolitical condition, the mean was response to all eight counterfactuals).

The effect of fusion and affiliation on moral outrage in response to counterfactuals was tested with 3 2(fusion: fused vs. unfused) by 2(political affiliation: liberal vs. conservative) x 2(condition: political vs. nonpolitical counterfactuals) ANOVAs including outrage in response to antiliberal, anticonservative, and nonpolitical counterfactuals as dependent measures. See Figure 6.2. Results for the ANOVAs are found in Table 6.4.

These analyses found a significant effect interaction between fusion and affiliation in the antiliberal condition such that fused liberals showed more outrage than unfused, while fused conservatives showed less. The main effect for affiliation was also significant, such that liberals showed more moral outrage. In the anticonservative counterfactuals, there was a main effect for affiliation such that conservatives showed more moral outrage, but no other effects. No significant effects were found in the nonpolitical counterfactuals.

To determine if these effects held when identification was controlled for, these ANOVAs were followed by 3 2(fusion: fused vs. unfused) by 2(political affiliation: liberal vs. conservative) ANCOVAs with identification and the identification by affiliation interaction term (calculated by multiplying identification by affiliation with

Figure 6.2: Moral outrage in response to counterfactuals



affiliation coded as liberals = 0 and conservatives = 1) entered as covariates. Results for these analyses are shown in Table 6.5. When the identification covariates were included, the effects found in the earlier ANOVAs were no longer significant. In both anticonservative and antiliberal counterfactuals, the effect for affiliation was no longer significant. In response to antiliberal counterfactuals, there was a significant identification by affiliation interaction, and the existing fusion by affiliation interaction was no longer significant (although it approached significance). No effects were found in the nonpolitical counterfactuals condition.

Table 6.4: ANOVA results for moral outrage

	Antiliberal counterfactuals					Anticonservative counterfactuals					Nonpolitical counterfactuals				
Source	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**
Fusion	0.03	1	0.03	0.029	n.s.	0.03	1	0.03	0.044	n.s.	0.12	1	0.12	0.464	n.s.
Affiliation	7.27	1	7.27	7.964	<.05	6.52	1	6.52	10.867	<.05	0.39	1	0.39	1.472	n.s.
Affiliation by fusion	11.37	1	11.37	12.468	<.001	0.26	1	0.26	0.437	n.s.	0.08	1	0.08	0.303	n.s.
Error	59.29	65	0.91			37.79	63	0.60			15.53	59	0.26		
Total	2650.59	69				2187.99	67				1771.48	63			

Table 6.5: ANCOVA results for moral outrage

	Antiliberal counterfactuals					Anticonservative counterfactuals					Nonpolitical counterfactuals				
Source	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**
Identification	0.03	1	0.03	0.039	n.s.	0.35	1	0.35	0.568	n.s.	0.02	1	0.02	0.073	n.s.
Identification by affiliation	3.61	1	3.61	4.306	p<.05	0.00	1	0.00	0.005	n.s.	0.02	1	0.02	0.064	n.s.
Fusion	0.69	1	0.69	0.829	n.s.	0.31	1	0.31	0.501	n.s.	0.11	1	0.11	0.389	n.s.
Affiliation	1.26	1	1.26	1.507	n.s.	0.55	1	0.55	0.9	n.s.	0.07	1	0.07	0.263	n.s.
Affiliation by fusion	2.97	1	2.97	3.541	0.064	0.18	1	0.18	0.296	n.s.	0.03	1	0.03	0.105	n.s.
Error	52.75	63	0.84			37.10	61	0.61			15.51	57	0.27		
Total	2650.59	69				2187.99	67				1771.48	63			

Moral cleansing

Moral cleansing was assessed through five items tracking participants' willingness to act to support the group (including items such as "How likely are you to donate money to your political party" and "How likely are you to volunteer for a political party or candidate") scored 1 to 9 with 9 indicating the greatest likelihood. A final score for moral cleansing was computed by finding the mean response across these five items. See Figure 6.3.

To test the effects of considering political counterfactuals on moral cleansing, a 2(condition: political vs. nonpolitical condition) by 2 (fusion: fused vs. unfused) by 2

(political affiliation: liberal vs. conservative) ANOVA was conducted. This analysis found a significant effect for fusion such that fused participants were more likely to endorse these items ($F(1,125) = 3.631$, $p<.01$). As above, this analysis was followed by a 2(political vs. nonpolitical condition) by 2(fused vs. unfused) by 2(political affiliation) ANCOVA including identification, the identification by affiliation interaction term, and the identification by affiliation by condition interaction term (computed by multiplying the identification by affiliation interaction by condition, coded as nonpolitical = 0 and political counterfactuals = 1) as continuous covariates. This analysis found a significant effect for identification ($F(1,122) = 8.952$, $p<.001$), but no other significant effect. See Table 6.6.

Figure 6.3: Moral cleansing

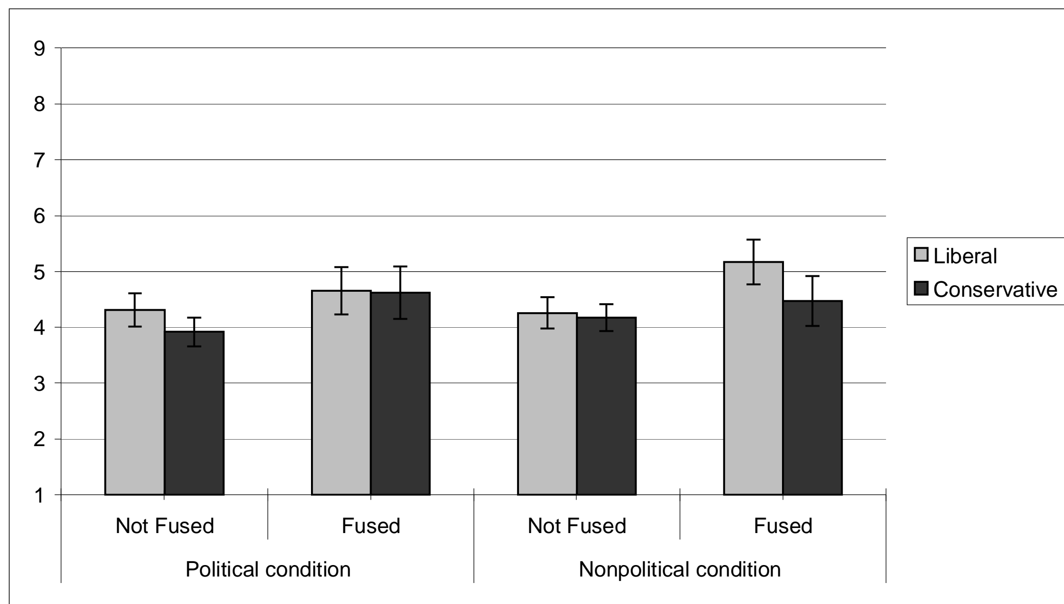


Table 6.6: ANCOVA results for moral cleansing

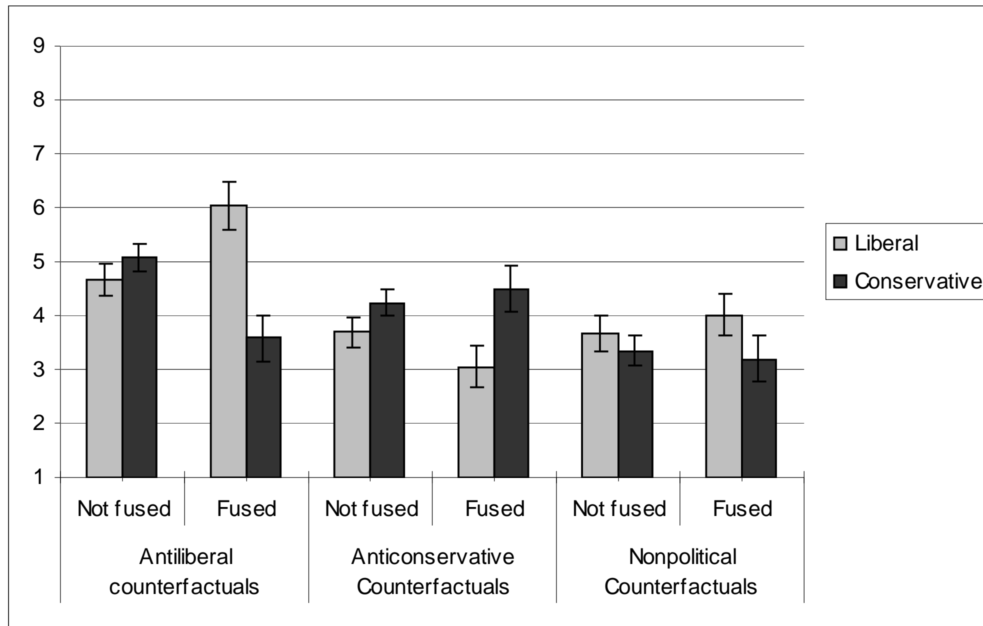
Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Identification	9.62	1	9.62	8.592	<.01
Identification by affiliation	0.77	1	0.77	0.689	n.s.
Identification by affiliation by condition	2.72	1	2.72	2.425	n.s.
Condition	2.97	1	2.97	2.649	n.s.
Affiliation	0.21	1	0.21	0.184	n.s.
Fusion	0.00	1	0.00	0	n.s.
Condition by affiliation	2.21	1	2.21	1.969	n.s.
Condition by fusion	1.35	1	1.35	1.202	n.s.
Affiliation by fusion	0.34	1	0.34	0.307	n.s.
Condition by affiliation by fusion	0.24	1	0.24	0.21	n.s.
Error	136.59	122	1.12		
Total	2698.20	133			

Emotional Reaction

After the moral outrage measures, participants were asked to complete ratings of their emotional reaction to the arguments presented, including the emotions of Anger, Sorrow, Disappointment, and Hope, scored 1 to 9 with 9 indicating strong agreement that they felt this emotion. As above, these were collapsed into scores for emotional response to antiliberal counterfactuals, anticonservative counterfactuals, and nonpolitical counterfactuals. For each of these emotions, a 2(fusion: fused vs. unfused) by 2(political affiliation: liberal vs. conservative) ANOVA was performed for the antiliberal, anticonservative, and nonpolitical counterfactuals and followed by a 2(fusion: fused vs. unfused) by 2(political affiliation: liberal vs. conservative) ANCOVA with identification, and the identification by affiliation interaction term, included as covariates.

Anger

Figure 6.4: Anger in response to counterfactuals



Results for the initial ANOVA analyses for anger are shown in Table 6.7. In the antiliberal counterfactuals, there was a significant interaction between affiliation and fusion such that fused liberals showed more anger in response to these counterfactuals and fused conservatives showed less, compared to unfused participants. In both antiliberal and anticonservative counterfactuals, there was a main effect for affiliation such that the targeted affiliation responded with more anger. There was no effect found in the nonpolitical condition.

ANCOVA results are shown in Table 6.8. When identification covariates were included in the analyses, the affiliation by fusion interaction found in response to the antiliberal counterfactuals remained significant. In the anticonservative condition, the

inclusion of the identification covariates actually lead to the fusion by affiliation interaction becoming significant. In this analysis, identification and the identification by affiliation interaction are significant covariates of anger in response to the anticonservative counterfactuals. No effects were found in the nonpolitical condition.

Table 6.7: ANOVA results for anger

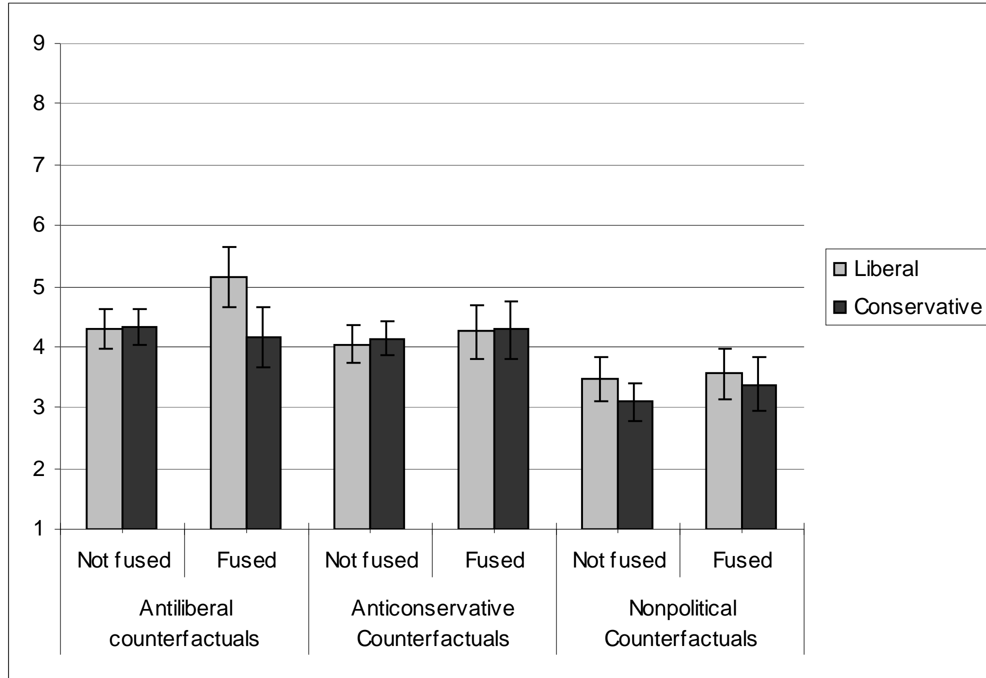
	Antiliberal counterfactuals					Anticonservative counterfactuals					Nonpolitical counterfactuals				
Source	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**
Fusion	0.06	1	0.06	0.03	n.s.	0.51	1	0.51	0.354	n.s.	0.15	1	0.15	0.077	n.s.
Affiliation	15.05	1	15.05	7.741	<.01	13.96	1	13.96	9.787	<.01	4.67	1	4.67	2.426	n.s.
Affiliation by fusion	29.52	1	29.52	15.181	<.001	2.95	1	2.95	2.069	n.s.	0.96	1	0.96	0.5	n.s.
Error	126.41	65	1.95			92.71	65	1.43			115.45	60	1.92		
Total	1797.81	69				1160.50	69				921.42	64			

Table 6.8: ANCOVA results for anger

	Antiliberal counterfactuals					Anticonservative counterfactuals					Nonpolitical counterfactuals				
Source	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**
Identification	0.44	1	0.44	0.222	n.s.	9.98	1	9.98	7.599	<.01	0.01	1	0.01	0.005	n.s.
Identification by affiliation	1.18	1	1.18	0.596	n.s.	5.35	1	5.35	4.071	<.05	0.89	1	0.89	0.452	n.s.
Fusion	0.01	1	0.01	0.004	n.s.	2.92	1	2.92	2.227	n.s.	0.69	1	0.69	0.352	n.s.
Affiliation	0.00	1	0.00	0	n.s.	10.39	1	10.39	7.91	<.01	0.18	1	0.18	0.093	n.s.
Affiliation by fusion	15.61	1	15.61	7.853	<.01	7.09	1	7.09	5.4	<.05	0.06	1	0.06	0.03	n.s.
Error	125.19	63	1.99			82.72	63	1.31			113.78	58	1.96		
Total	1797.81	69				1160.50	69				921.42	64			

Sorrow

Figure 6.5: Sorrow in response to counterfactuals



Results for the measure of sorrow are displayed in Figure 6.5. Sorrow was analyzed using the same approach as anger. Results for the ANOVA analyses are shown in Table 6.9. This analysis found no significant effect for sorrow in response to antiliberal, anticonservative, or nonpolitical counterfactuals. When these analyses were followed by the ANCOVAs, the results did not change significantly. ANCOVA results are shown in Table 6.10. The ANCOVA analyses found no significant effect.

Table 6.9: ANOVA results for sorrow

	Antiliberal counterfactuals					Anticonservative counterfactuals					Nonpolitical counterfactuals				
Source	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**P**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**
Fusion	1.74	1	1.74	0.622	n.s.	0.44	1	0.44	0.195	n.s.	0.52	1	0.52	0.258	n.s.
Affiliation	3.33	1	3.33	1.188	n.s.	0.06	1	0.06	0.027	n.s.	1.15	1	1.15	0.573	n.s.
Affiliation by fusion	3.76	1	3.76	1.344	n.s.	0.02	1	0.02	0.009	n.s.	0.17	1	0.17	0.085	n.s.
Error	181.91	65	2.80			147.51	65	2.27			120.24	60	2.00		
Total	1525.81	69				1331.44	69				836.50	64			

Table 6.10: ANCOVA results for sorrow

	Antiliberal counterfactuals					Anticonservative counterfactuals					Nonpolitical counterfactuals				
Source	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**
Identification	0.77	1	0.77	0.268	n.s.	2.16	1	2.16	0.937	n.s.	0.40	1	0.40	0.2	n.s.
Identification by affiliation	0.44	1	0.44	0.151	n.s.	0.78	1	0.78	0.338	n.s.	2.96	1	2.96	1.474	n.s.
Fusion	0.64	1	0.64	0.222	n.s.	0.00	1	0.00	0.001	n.s.	1.34	1	1.34	0.665	n.s.
Affiliation	0.02	1	0.02	0.006	n.s.	0.81	1	0.81	0.353	n.s.	2.04	1	2.04	1.016	n.s.
Affiliation by fusion	1.66	1	1.66	0.577	n.s.	0.11	1	0.11	0.048	n.s.	1.82	1	1.82	0.906	n.s.
Error	181.14	63	2.88			145.30	63	2.31			116.40	58	2.01		
Total	1525.81	69				1331.44	69				836.50	64			

Disappointment

Disappointment was analyzed using the same approach as anger and sorrow. Results are shown in Figure 6.6. Results for the ANOVAs are shown in Table 6.11. Initial ANOVAs found a significant effect for affiliation in the antiliberal condition such that liberals showed more disappointment, which was qualified by a significant fusion by affiliation interaction such that fused liberals showed the most disappointment and fused conservatives the least. There were no significant effects found in the anticonservative counterfactuals or in response to the nonpolitical counterfactuals. The results for the ANCOVA analyses controlling for identification are shown in Table 6.12. When identification and the identification by affiliation interaction were controlled for, no significant effects were found.

Figure 6.6: Disappointment in response to counterfactuals

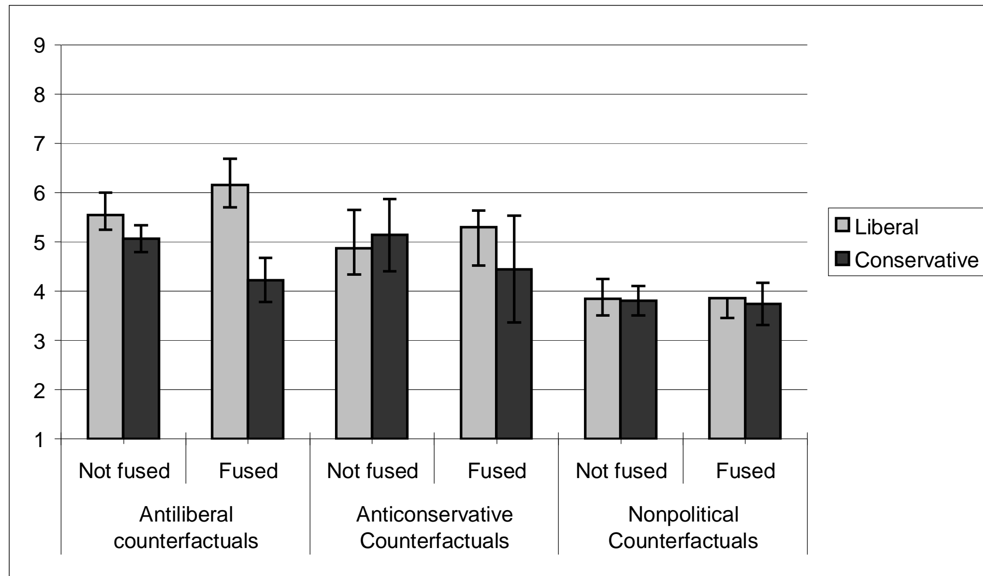


Table 6.11: ANOVA results for disappointment

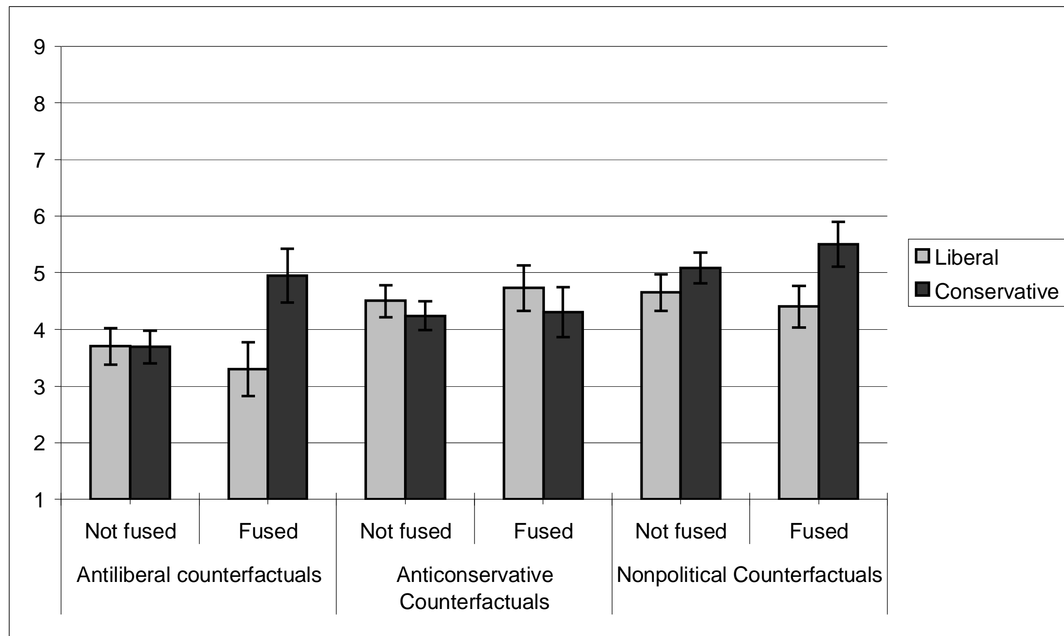
	Antiliberal counterfactuals					Anticonservative counterfactuals					Nonpolitical counterfactuals				
Source	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**P**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**
Fusion	0.20	1	0.20	0.109	n.s.	0.04	1	0.04	0.027	n.s.	0.02	1	0.02	0.008	n.s.
Affiliation	20.49	1	20.49	11.358	p=.001	0.30	1	0.30	0.184	n.s.	0.10	1	0.10	0.042	n.s.
Affiliation by fusion	7.39	1	7.39	4.095	p<.05	1.74	1	1.74	1.055	n.s.	0.02	1	0.02	0.009	n.s.
Error	117.24	65	1.80			106.94	65	1.65			134.76	60	2.25		
Total	2043.13	69				1610.56	69				1067.98	64			

Table 6.12: ANCOVA results for disappointment

	Antiliberal counterfactuals					Anticonservative counterfactuals					Nonpolitical counterfactuals				
Source	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**
Identification	1.01	1	1.01	0.549	n.s.	1.01	1	1.01	0.604	n.s.	0.17	1	0.17	0.074	n.s.
Identification by affiliation	1.25	1	1.25	0.681	n.s.	0.00	1	0.00	0	n.s.	2.94	1	2.94	1.311	n.s.
Fusion	0.26	1	0.26	0.139	n.s.	0.84	1	0.84	0.505	n.s.	0.39	1	0.39	0.175	n.s.
Affiliation	0.02	1	0.02	0.013	n.s.	0.02	1	0.02	0.013	n.s.	2.53	1	2.53	1.128	n.s.
Affiliation by fusion	2.81	1	2.81	1.529	n.s.	1.26	1	1.26	0.758	n.s.	0.82	1	0.82	0.366	n.s.
Error	115.90	63	1.84			104.98	63	1.67			130.22	58	2.25		
Total	2043.13	69				1610.56	69				1067.98	64			

Hope

Figure 6.7: Hope in response to counterfactuals



Hope was analyzed in the same way as anger, sorrow, and disappointment. See Figure 6.7. Results for the initial ANOVAs are reported in Table 6.13. The ANOVAs found no significant effects in response to the antiliberal and anticonservative counterfactuals, although in response to the antiliberal counterfactuals both the main effect for affiliation and the interaction between fusion and affiliation approached significance such that liberals in general and fused liberals in particular showed low rates of hope. There was a significant main effect found for affiliation in response to the nonpolitical counterfactuals, such that conservatives showed more hope. The results for the ANCOVAs which controlled for identification and the identification by affiliation interaction are shown in Table 6.14. When these covariates were added, no significant

results were found. The previously marginal effects for response to antiliberal counterfactuals no longer approached significance, and the effect for affiliation in the nonpolitical condition was no longer significant.

Table 6.13: ANOVA results for hope

	Antiliberal counterfactuals					Anticonservative counterfactuals					Nonpolitical counterfactuals				
Source	SS	df	MS	F	P	SS	df	MS	F	p	SS	df	MS	F	p
Fusion	2.56	1	2.56	0.947	n.s.	0.30	1	0.30	0.183	n.s.	0.11	1	0.11	0.063	n.s.
Affiliation	9.52	1	9.52	3.517	0.065	1.63	1	1.63	0.995	n.s.	8.67	1	8.67	4.81	<.05
Affiliation by fusion	9.76	1	9.76	3.604	0.062	0.09	1	0.09	0.057	n.s.	1.62	1	1.62	0.899	n.s.
Error	175.95	65	2.71			106.46	65	1.64			108.19	60	1.80		
Total	1200.31	69				1450.19	69				1654.08	64			

Table 6.14: ANCOVA results for hope

	Antiliberal counterfactuals					Anticonservative counterfactuals					Nonpolitical counterfactuals				
Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	SS	df	MS	F	p	SS	df	MS	F	p
Identification	6.20	1	6.20	2.379	n.s.	1.02	1	1.02	0.618	n.s.	0.03	1	0.03	0.016	n.s.
Identification by affiliation	0.03	1	0.03	0.01	n.s.	2.03	1	2.03	1.222	n.s.	0.03	1	0.03	0.018	n.s.
Fusion	0.28	1	0.28	0.107	n.s.	0.23	1	0.23	0.137	n.s.	0.00	1	0.00	0	n.s.
Affiliation	0.88	1	0.88	0.336	n.s.	1.04	1	1.04	0.624	n.s.	0.23	1	0.23	0.126	n.s.
Affiliation by fusion	6.59	1	6.59	2.53	n.s.	0.24	1	0.24	0.147	n.s.	0.87	1	0.87	0.465	n.s.
Error	164.18	63	2.61			104.44	63	1.66			107.95	58	1.86		
Total	1200.31	69				1450.19	69				1654.08	64			

DISCUSSION

Overall, these data provide mixed support for the theory that sacred values are an outgrowth of the extremist mindset in general and identity fusion in specific. While there were significant findings in line with what were expected, it is also the case that these findings did not appear evenly across all the measures. Still, even this mixed support provides some evidence demonstrating a connection between identity fusion and the development of sacred values.

Specific predictions

Prediction 1:

1. Identity fusion with a political affiliation will be a predictor of resistance to counterfactuals in the form of greater reported difficulty in considering these counterfactuals and more moral outrage, moral cleansing, and stronger emotional reactions following the consideration of political counterfactuals but not following the consideration of nonpolitical counterfactuals

This prediction has several components, all of which reflect the central argument that fusion will predict the development of sacred values associated with political affiliation. In the first component it was predicted that people fused with their political affiliation would report more difficulty in considering political counterfactuals running contrary to their political beliefs than unfused participants, but this effect would not replicate in those considering nonpolitical counterfactuals. The analyses for resistance provide some support for this prediction: the ANOVA for anticonservative counterfactuals shows the predicted affiliation by fusion interaction, such that fused conservatives presented with anticonservative counterfactuals showed the most resistance and fused liberals the least. This effect was not significant in the antiliberal counterfactuals, but the data followed the same pattern and the effect approached significance. Fusion with the group appears to have the overall effect of increasing resistance to counterfactuals which are contrary to the group and decreasing resistance to counterfactuals which are in line with the group. As predicted this was only true in the case of the political counterfactuals, providing additional support for the argument that

the effects of fusion are specific to domains relevant to the values or beliefs associated with the group.

The second component of this prediction referred to moral outrage. It was predicted that participants who were fused with their political affiliation would, compared to participants not fused with their affiliation, show greater rejection and demonization of people making counterfactuals that challenge group beliefs. This component was somewhat supported by the data: in response to the antiliberal counterfactuals, the expected fusion by affiliation interaction was found. Interestingly, there was no such effect found in response to the anticonservative counterfactuals, although there was a main effect for affiliation. The fact that these effects emerge most clearly in counterfactuals framed as contrary to liberal positions is interesting. One possible explanation for this is that fused liberals are more focused on morality or more willing to cast opposition in moral terms than fused conservatives. This is somewhat at odds with research on political ideology, which has tended to argue that casting issues in moral terms or greater self-reported concern over moral issues is associated with conservativism, not liberalism (Miller, 1994), and also challenged by the fact that fused conservatives showed the lowest moral outrage in response to the antiliberal counterfactuals. The data suggest that fused participants in general were more responsive to the antiliberal counterfactuals, not necessarily that liberals by themselves were driving the effects.

A second explanation for the differential response across counterfactuals relies on context. Because the data were collected during a period in which the American

government was controlled primarily by the Republican party, participants may have seen liberals as a minority opinion (the majority of these data were collected in the spring and fall of 2006, when the Republican Party controlled both the Presidency and Congress). This could have the effect of making both liberals and conservatives respond more to counterfactuals framed as contrary to liberal positions: because conservatives dominated the political landscape, counterfactuals framed as contrary to liberal perspectives could be seen as more likely to mirror the framing of such issues in the public sphere. The antiliberal counterfactuals may have caused greater response because those arguments were more likely to affect policy than counterfactuals expressing the minority opinion.

An alternate explanation which also relies on context would be that the specific items framed as antiliberal draw more on moral issues than those framed as anticonservative: although the items were designed to be balanced, they were not pretested to see if the moral weight was the same across the political conditions. Without this comparison, it is possible that the differential effects found in moral outrage are due to the relevance of morals to the specific situations presented in the antiliberal counterfactuals.

The third component of this prediction referred to moral cleansing behavior, or behavior designed to reaffirm membership in the group and support for its perspective. The analyses of moral cleansing items found a significant effect for fusion, but no effect for condition or fusion by condition interaction as was predicted. These results suggest that people fused with their political affiliation were more likely in general to endorse the moral cleansing items, and that this was not strongly affected by the consideration of

counterfactuals. Most likely this is a reflection of the content of these items: because moral cleansing was operationally defined as pro-group behavior or sacrifice, what these items show is that people fused with their political affiliation are more likely to engage in pro-group behavior. While this is certainly support for the argument that fusion is related to commitment to the groups, this does not provide support for the argument that exposure to political counterfactuals led to an increase in moral cleansing behavior. One possible explanation for this is the fact that not all of the counterfactuals ran in opposition to the participants' political beliefs. This may have reduced the overall impact of considering political counterfactuals, because in addition to counterfactuals that challenged values associated with group membership participants were also being exposed to counterfactuals that reaffirmed these values.

The final component of this prediction had to do with emotional reaction to the counterfactuals. It was predicted that relative to participants not fused with their political affiliation, fused participants would show a stronger emotional response to political counterfactuals contrary to their political opinion, and that this effect would not be found in response to nonpolitical counterfactuals. The data showed mixed support for this prediction. There was neither a main effect for fusion nor an interaction between fusion and political affiliation for measures of sorrow or hope, although for hope in the antiliberal condition the interaction between fusion and affiliation approached significance. However, there was a significant interaction between fusion and affiliation for self-reported anger in the antiliberal condition, with fused liberals showing the most anger and fused conservatives showing the least. A similar effect was for disappointment

was found in response to the antiliberal counterfactuals. While not all of the emotional responses identified in Tetlock et al. (2000) were found in this sample, the findings for anger and disappointment do support the overall prediction that fusion encourages drastic reaction to counterattitudinal counterfactuals. One possibility for the lack of effects for sorrow and hope is that these emotions may be more difficult to evoke and political counterfactuals just not impactful enough in this sample to pull them out.

As with moral outrage, the majority of the effects in the ANOVA analyses of emotional response were found in response to antiliberal counterfactuals. As with moral outrage, it was also the case that the interaction did not appear to focus on only one group: in both anger and disappointment, fused liberals showed the most emotional response while fused conservatives showed the least, suggesting that it was not only one group driving these effects. This reinforces the context explanations and suggests that this difference in responding may therefore be due either to a general societal context which made participants more reactive to counterfactuals framed as contrary to liberal positions or because the specific counterfactuals framed as antiliberal focused on issues that evoked stronger responses.

Collectively, these analyses provide support for the prediction that fusion should predict resistance to political counterfactuals. It is clearly the case that fused people were more reactive to political counterfactuals than nonpolitical counterfactuals, and that across measures there was an inconsistently significant but stable (in terms of the direction of the means) finding that fusion lead participants to react more strongly to the counterfactuals than unfused participants. Although not found for every item, in general

the effects suggest that fused participants did react as if they had developed sacred values in line with the group.

Prediction 2:

2. Fusion will be an effective predictor of resistance to counterfactuals even when controlling for identification.

Earlier tests of sacred values have avoided directly addressing the question of how these sacred values develop, and have assessed the likelihood of any person having pro-group sacred values through tests which measure membership with the group or self-reported strength of belief. One fundamental prediction of the identity fusion approach is that strength of identification with a group is a poor measure of these effects, because sacred values are an outgrowth of fusion, which is distinct from identification. Therefore, while fusion is associated with strong identification, the effects of fusion should exist even when controlling for identification.

The ANCOVA analyses provide some support for this prediction. In the case of resistance to counterfactuals and anger, controlling for identification weakened many of the results some but did not change the findings dramatically. In fact, when identification was controlled for in the analysis for anger as a response to anticonservative counterfactuals, the result was that the affiliation by fusion interaction was actually found to be significant. In the case of the findings for hope, disappointment, and moral outrage, the inclusion of the identification covariates significantly weakened the fusion effects. Despite this, identification was not a consistent predictor of the effects. Identification by

itself was only found to be a significant predictor of moral cleansing and anger as a result of consideration of anticonservative counterfactuals, although in the latter case this was qualified by a significant identification by affiliation interaction. A similar identification by affiliation interaction was found to predict moral outrage in response to antiliberal counterfactuals.

It is interesting that the effects which appear most resistant to the inclusion of identification were found in resistance to counterfactuals and in anger. This may be significant because unlike moral outrage (where identification had a large effect), these items were framed in terms of participants' response to the counterfactual itself. Moral outrage was framed as a response to individuals who make the counterfactual argument rather than a response to the counterfactual itself. Research in social identity theory has suggested that identification with a group may be one element which predicts willingness to derogate or develop bias against outgroups (e.g. Shamir & Sagiv-Schifter, 2006). The particularly strong impact of identification on the moral outrage measures may be accounted for by this effect, as the moral outrage measures represent the kind of antioutgroup sentiment that has been associated with identification.

In contrast, the measures of resistance and emotional response are related to the participants' processing of the counterfactual arguments. These reactions: a refusal to consider the counterfactual, and a significant negative emotional response to the counterfactual, have less to do with the participants' conception of who it is that would make such an argument, and more directly assess whether the participants are willing to engage with the argument itself in a rational or calculative way. This negation is key to

the Sacred Value Protection Model and arguably a more direct measure of the kind of absolutism associated with extremism than rejection of individuals making counterfactual arguments. As would be predicted if identity fusion did represent the underlying psychology of extremism, this absolutism appears in these data to be more strongly affected by fusion than identification.

General discussion

Although the findings were slightly inconsistent, taken together these data do provide support for the argument that fusion is related to the psychology of sacred values. Fused participants reacted to political counterfactuals contrary to their political affiliation with more resistance, moral outrage, and anger as would be predicted by the Sacred Value Protection Model. These effects did not emerge in nonpolitical counterfactuals, demonstrating that the findings were not due to general processing tendencies among fused participants.

I should add several caveats to these conclusions. One is related to the persistent difference between reactions to the antiliberal counterfactuals and the anticonservative counterfactuals. While the reactions of both liberals and conservatives to these items suggest that this difference is due to context rather than reactivity of the participants themselves, this difference was not predicted and cannot be fully explained with these data. One way to disambiguate the potential explanations is to replicate this study: if the antiliberal counterfactuals continue to evoke the most response even as the political climate changes, then it is likely to be related to the specific issues selected as antiliberal.

A second caveat is prompted by the lack of a consistent difference between affiliations in response to the political counterfactuals. Because the items were designed to evoke differences between liberals and conservatives, the lack of consistent strong responses along this axis suggests that the items may not have been impactful enough to evoke such differences. It is possible that, as in Study 1, this is attributable mainly to the fact that the majority of the sample was young enough that politics is not seen as interesting enough to generate a response. However, the fact that many of the findings show significant effects for political affiliation even if not all do does provide heartening evidence that the counterfactuals did evoke a differential response across affiliations.

Even with these caveats, these data do provide support for the argument that the psychology of sacred values may be related to identity fusion. This provides an important theoretical underpinning for research in the Sacred Value Protection Model. By casting sacred values as an identity fusion, and therefore self-related phenomenon, these data open the door to a greater understanding of how sacred values develop, why people respond to challenges to sacred values in the way that they do, and how to best approach situations in which sacred values are relevant. By looking at the response to challenged sacred values as an extension of self-protection and self-verification responses, future work in this area can explore how to address sacred values without challenging the self or how to provide support to challenged self-views in ways other than resistance and moral outrage.

Chapter 7: Study 3

The three studies in this dissertation used studied extremism in the context of political affiliation. This is based on the premise that extremism is a psychological state defined by the elements of moral authority, absolutism, and a sense of threat, not by specific beliefs contrary to mainstream opinion or membership in groups deemed abnormal. This is somewhat different than the way that the term extremism is popularly used, in that most people deemed extremists or members of extremist groups are associated with violent or otherwise radical groups working to accomplish goals which are greatly at odds with traditional mainstream political opinion. One fundamental argument of the approach taken in this dissertation is the idea that these kinds of violent or otherwise extreme behaviors are not the only possible outcome of an extremist form of association with the group. In fact, the identity fusion formulation would argue that there should be a strong interaction between the development of fusion with a group and the teachings of that group in predicting the likelihood of violent or antisocial behavior. Because fusion is characterized by a strong association between the personal and social self-views, behavior should be shaped strongly by the content of both. If the avowed and public social prototype of the group includes strongly prosocial behavior, then fusion would likely increase the chance of prosocial behavior in the group members. In the same way that anonymity can actually increase prosocial behavior if group norms encourage it (Johnson & Downing, 1979), it is likely that fusion with a peaceful group would have the effect of decreasing the chance of violence even alongside the development of moral authority, absolutism, and a sense of threat.

If this is true, then it should be possible to find examples of this kind of "day-to-day" extremism in mainstream groups that do not encourage the use of violence. One example of a domain which includes strong group identities and moralistic language that lends itself well to the development of extremist ideologies is the political arena. Many people identify very strongly with social identities of "liberal," "conservative," "Republican," or "Democrat," as can be seen by the almost ubiquitous sight of bumper stickers used to proclaim a political identity (Endersby & Towle, 1996). The relatively pacifistic norms existing in the political domain suggest that if someone were to develop a fused identity with one of these groups, it is unlikely that any extremist mindset would display itself in violence against the outgroup. However, it should display itself in other ways. One such way may be in resistance to compromise: since politics is in part a negotiation that requires compromise with the outgroup, and the absolutist element of extremism makes compromise unattractive, it is very likely that these extremist beliefs would come out as a rejection of any form of compromise. This study attempts to establish a connection between identity fusion and this kind of day-to-day political extremism.

People making political decisions often have to make compromises. A candidate offers a platform which represents his or her stance on a wide variety of issues. For most moderate candidates, these positions may cover a range of perspectives and voters deciding if they wish to vote for the candidate or not must weigh their position on a variety of issues to make the decision. Because an important element of the extremist mindset is the idea that the group is absolutely correct, this weighing process should be

extremely difficult in that it requires the voter to compare different political opinions and decide which is the most important. As demonstrated by Study 2, people who are strongly aligned with the group reject this kind of comparison quite strongly. It is very likely that an extremist will refuse to negotiate or compromise their perspective enough to vote for a candidate, even if their ultimate goal may be better served by such a compromise. Additionally, because extremists tend to assume the worst of opposing groups, the idea of compromise may be inherently less appealing. If the opposing group is seen as actively immoral, then compromise may be very unattractive.

Study 2 was a survey study that sought to establish a link between identity fusion and political extremism. There were two specific predictions made in this study. If voting for a particular candidate means tacitly endorsing the perspectives of that candidate even when they do not completely overlap with their own beliefs, most people will make a rational calculation of how important their various goals are and how this candidate represents them. For someone fused with a group or ideology, this type of calculated trade-off should be seen as a threat to their self-views, and hence extremely unappealing. Because of this, it is likely that fused people will be less inclined to compromise on their preferences. It was predicted that:

1. People who are fused with a particular ideology will be more likely to refuse to compromise their preferences on political issues.

Because extremists believe that their group is morally right, and their opponents are immoral, the idea of a compromise may be particularly unappealing. In this case,

compromising is not a diplomatic act, but instead an endorsement of immoral behavior. If identity fusion is related to this belief, then people who are fused with a group should demonstrate less willingness to compromise with opponents. Therefore it was predicted that:

2. People who are fused with a political ideology will endorse a more combative and less cooperative description of the political process.

This study also gives an opportunity to examine the language use of fused participants. Research has suggested that there may be stable linguistic differences in the language used by extremist groups in publicly released documents (Smith, 2004) and by extremists in online discussion (Seyle & Pennebaker, 2007). If fusion is related to extremism, then there should be stable differences in the language used by fused participants in this context as well. Earlier research in extremism suggested that the strongest linguistic correlates of extremism were found in patterns of pronoun use, with extremists using more "we" language, less "I," and using more third-person pronouns. Therefore it was predicted that:

3. There will be a stable difference between fused and unfused participants in the pronouns used to describe those within and opposed to the group.

METHOD

Participants

Participants included undergraduate psychology students who enrolled in this experiment for class credit and members of the general population of the Internet who

were recruited from postings on volunteer websites and listings of online experiments. Undergraduates received class credit for participating, while participants from the general population were entered into a drawing for gift cards as a thank-you for their participation. Only American citizens who indicated voting in 2004 or 2006 or intentions to vote in 2006 were included in the sample. Two-hundred and twenty-two eligible participants responded to this survey, including 164 from the undergraduate research pool (106 F, 56 M, 2 no information given; mean age = 18.994, SD = 1.34, median age = 19) and 44 from the general population of the Internet (36 F, 8 M; mean age = 33.30, SD = 11.45, median age = 30.5).

Materials and Procedure

After being directed to the study website, participants read an informed consent document and entered their initials in order to proceed. Participants initially completed a measure of political affiliation (including the items "extremely liberal/progressive, moderate liberal, moderate, moderate conservative, extremely conservative, libertarian, and other"), age, gender, American citizenship, and the organizational identification and identity fusion scales for their self-nominated political affiliation. Following this, participants responded to writing prompts asking them to describe what their answer on the identity fusion scale meant to them, what their political affiliation meant to them, the typical conservative, the typical liberal, conservatives as a group, and liberals as a group. After writing these responses, participants completed the dependent measures for refusal to compromise and endorsement of combative politics. Refusal to compromise on voting issues was assessed by asking participants how much each of the following issues

affected their vote: "abortion, tax policy, the war on drugs, national security, the war on terror, social security, welfare reform, and health care." Responses were on a scale from 1 to 9, with 9 indicating that they would not vote for a candidate with a different perspective than themselves on the issue. Combative perspective on politics was assessed with six items assessing willingness to compromise (including: "Political compromise is never a good idea.") and rejection of opposing parties (including: "The political party opposing my affiliation is entirely wrong: they have no positions at all that I agree with"). See Appendix D for materials used in this study.

RESULTS

Fusion and identification measures

Final results include 70 fused participants and 138 unfused. Identification was scored as the sum of responses to the organizational identification scale (mean = 15.02, SD = 4.48). See Table 7.1

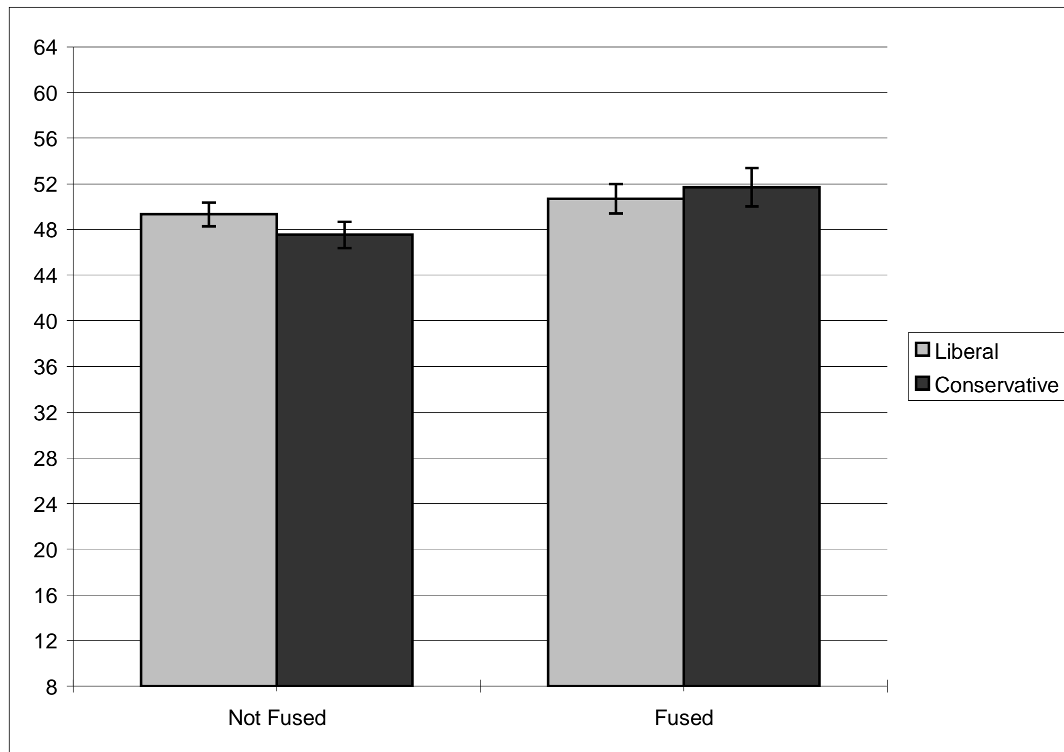
Table 7.1: Fusion and identification scores across political affiliations

Political affiliation	N	N (%) Fused	Mean identification
Extremely liberal	13	6 (46.2%)	16.92
Moderate liberal	76	29 (38.2%)	16.30
Moderate	44	12 (27.3%)	12.72
Moderate conservative	59	16 (27.1%)	14.27
Extremely conservative	7	5 (71.4%)	21.71
Libertarian	9	2 (22%)	12.56
Total	208	70 (33.7%)	15.02

Impact of issues on voting decisions

Two separate analyses were conducted to assess the impact of fusion with political affiliation on voting decisions. To determine if there were significant differences across political affiliations, these analyses also including political affiliation as a predictor. In order to increase the number of participants per cell and keep analyses similar across measures, a measure of political affiliation was computed as in Study 2 by excluding moderates and libertarians from the analysis and dichotomizing the remaining participants into conservative or liberal group.

Figure 7.1: Overall impact of issues on voting decisions



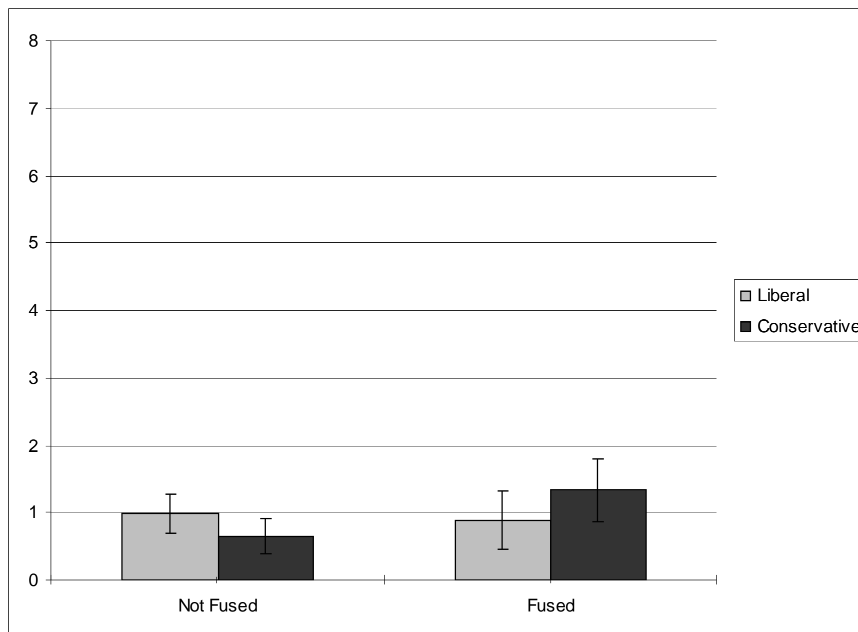
The first analysis for the impact of issues looked at the mean response across all issues. A 2(fusion: fused vs. unfused) x 2(political affiliation: liberal or conservative) ANOVA was conducted to identify the effects of fusion on average impact of political issues on participants' voting decisions. This ANOVA found a significant main effect for fusion such that fused participants showed a stronger impact of issues ($F(1, 151) = 4.372$, $p<.05$) but no effect for political affiliation ($F(1, 151) = .080$, n.s.) or interaction between fusion and political affiliation ($F(1, 151) = 1.120$, n.s.). See Figure 7.1 for results.

Following this ANOVA, the effects were tested to see if they appeared when identification was controlled for. A 2(fusion: fused vs. unfused) x 2(political affiliation: liberal or conservative) ANCOVA was computed, including identification and the identification by affiliation interaction term (calculated by multiplying identification by affiliation, coded as liberals = 0 and conservatives = 1) as covariates. When these covariates were included identification was found to be a significant predictor ($F(1, 148) = 5.266$, $p<.05$) but there were no other effects found. Fusion was no longer a significant predictor ($F(1, 148) = .100$, n.s.), nor was political affiliation ($F(1, 148) = .031$, n.s.), the interaction of affiliation by fusion ($F(1, 148) = .437$, n.s.), or the identification by affiliation interaction term ($F(1, 148) = .059$, n.s.).

The second analysis of these data looked at the total number of issues the participants identified as issues for which they would not vote with a candidate who did not share their perspective (a score of "8" on that item). As above, this was initially tested with a 2(fusion: fused vs. unfused) x 2(political affiliation: liberal or conservative) ANOVA. This found no significant main effect for political affiliation ($F(1, 151) = .074$, n.s.) or

fusion (F(1, 148) = 2.128, n.s.). The interaction between fusion and affiliation approached significance such that fused conservatives showed the largest number of issues marked as refusing to compromise (F(1, 148) = 3.724, p=.056). See Figure 7.2. This was followed by a 2(fusion: fused vs. unfused) x 2(political affiliation: liberal or conservative) ANCOVA with identification and the identification by affiliation interaction terms entered as covariates. When these were entered, the analysis showed no significant effect for identification (F(1, 148) = 2.324, n.s.), the identification by affiliation interaction (F(1, 148) = .320, n.s.), political affiliation (F(1, 148) = .478, n.s.), or fusion (F(1, 148) = .427, n.s.). The fusion by affiliation interaction was still found to approach significance (F(1, 148) = 3.375, p=.068).

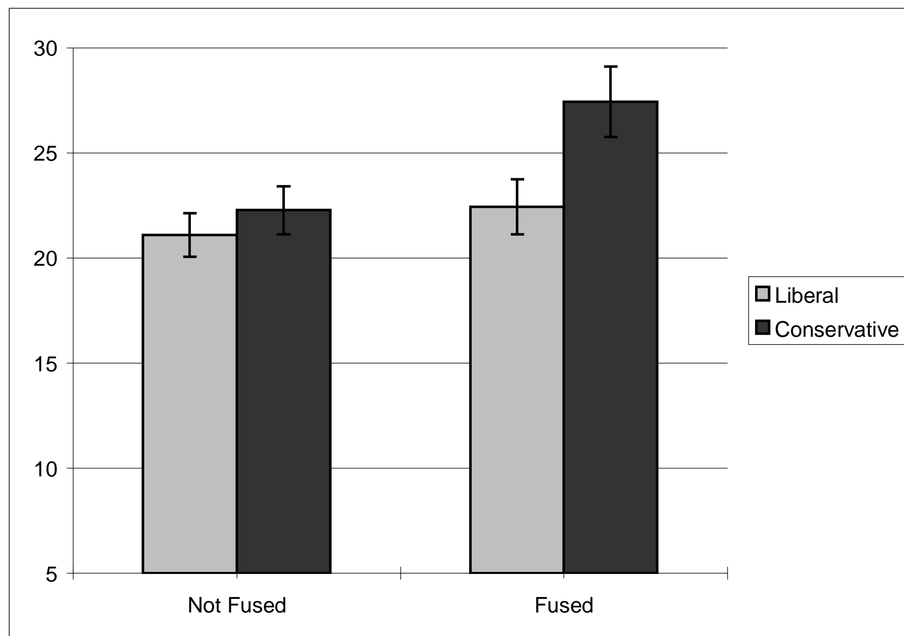
Figure 7.2: Number of issues where participant refused to compromise



Endorsement of combative politics

The final score for endorsement of combative politics was found by computing a sum of the responses to the six items assessing a refusal to compromise (mean = 22.65, SD = 7.637). This score was analyzed by a 2(fusion: fused vs. unfused) x 2(political affiliation: liberal vs. conservative) ANOVA. This analysis found a significant main effect for affiliation such that conservatives indicated more endorsement of combative politics ($F(1, 151) = 5.524$, $p<.05$), and a significant main effect for fusion such that fused participants endorsed these items more ($F(1, 151) = 6.119$, $p<.05$). There was no significant fusion by affiliation interaction ($F(1, 151) = 2.121$, n.s.). As above, this was followed by a 2(fusion: fused vs. unfused) x 2(political affiliation: liberal or conservative) ANCOVA with identification and the identification by affiliation

Figure 7.3: Mean response to combative politics scale, controlled for identification



interaction terms entered as covariates to determine if these effects held true when identification was controlled for. This analysis found no effect. Identification was not a significant covariate ($F(1, 148) = .906$, n.s.), nor was the identification by affiliation interaction term ($F(1, 148) = .578$, n.s.). The effects for fusion and affiliation were no longer significant (fusion $F(1, 148) = 1.488$; affiliation ($F(1, 148) = .013$, both n.s.).

Linguistic analysis

Linguistic data were analyzed using the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) program, a text analysis program that analyzes word usage across a variety of psychologically meaningful categories (Pennebaker, Francis, & Booth, 2001). This program describes individual texts by showing the percentage of words in that text that fall into 72 separate categories. To get a stable percentage score, only participants who wrote 25 words or more for that question were included in each analysis. Participants did not respond at length to the prompts "describe what your answer on the identity fusion scale meant to you," "describe liberals in general" and "describe conservatives in general," and when texts of less than 25 words were excluded there were too few texts remaining to effectively analyze ($n = 33$ for fusion scale prompt, 44 when discussing own affiliation, and 55 when discussing opposing affiliation). Responses to these items were not analyzed.

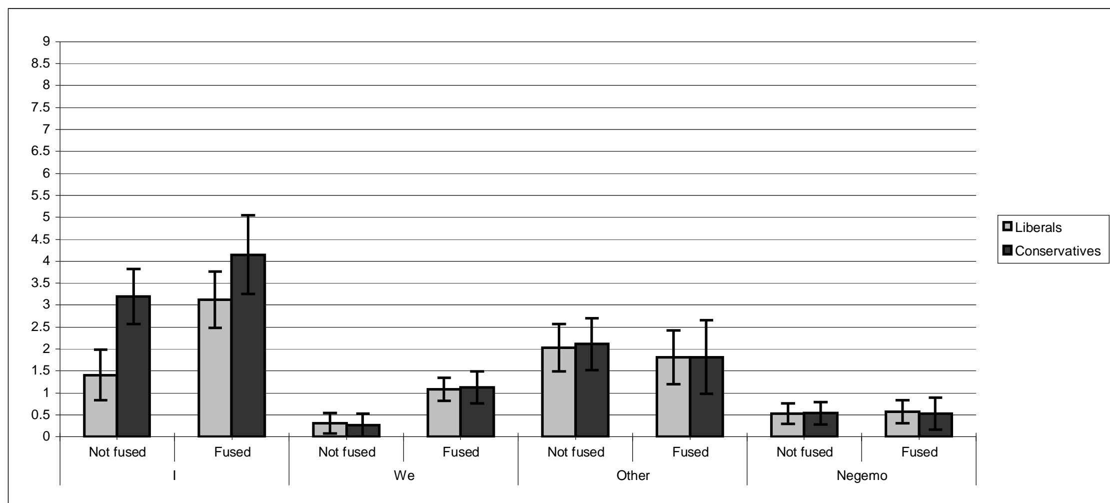
Earlier research in the linguistic correlates of extremism identified a linguistic fingerprint of extremism characterized by a high use of "we" language, a low use of "I" language, high use of third-person plural pronouns, and increased use of negative

emotion language (Seyle & Pennebaker, 2007). Following this research, the current study focused on these linguistic categories.

Response to prompt "What does your affiliation mean to you"

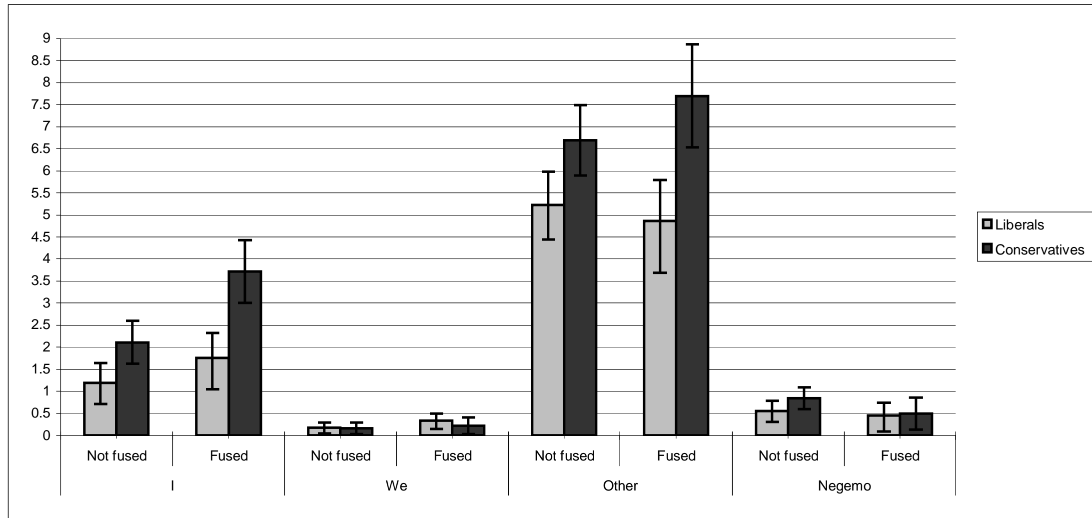
A series of 2(fusion: fused vs. unfused) by 2(political affiliation: liberal vs. conservative) ANCOVAs with identification and the identification by affiliation interaction terms entered as covariates were conducted on the LIWC categories of the use of "I" language ("I," "me," "my"), the use of "We" language ("we," "us," "our"), references to others (including "they," "them," and "their" as well as "he," "you," and similar references), and negative emotion words. The only significant effects found appeared in the measure of "I" language, where a main effect for fusion was found such that fused participants used significantly more "I" language ($F(1,81) = 5.290$, $p<.05$), and in "We" language where identification was found to be a significant predictor ($F(1,81) = 6.487$, $p<.05$). No other significant effects were found. See Figure 7.4.

Figure 7.4: Language use when describing own affiliation in general



Response to prompt "Describe how you see the average member of your affiliation"

Figure 7.5: Language use when describing average member of own affiliation



Participants responded to two linguistic prompts asking them to describe the average liberal and the average conservative. These were recoded according to political affiliation to create a measure of how participants described members of their own affiliation and members of the opposing affiliation. The first analysis looked at the difference between fused and unfused participants describing members of their own political affiliation. When those who had written less than 25 words were removed from the analysis, the final sample included 93 texts (mean word count = 46.78, SD = 19.23). As above, to analyze this language a series of 2(fusion: fused vs. unfused) x 2(political affiliation: liberal vs. conservative) x identification (continuous) x the identification by affiliation interaction term ANCOVAs including "I" language, "We" language, other words, and negative emotion words as dependent measures were conducted.

These ANCOVAs found no significant differences, although as with the descriptions of the group in general fused participants did use more "I" language and this

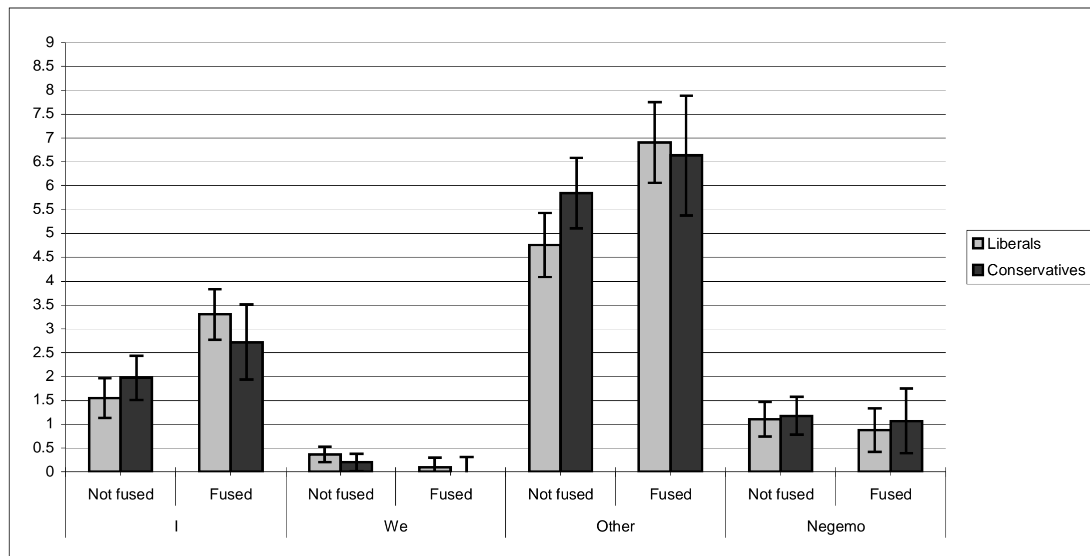
effect approached significance ($F(1,86) = 3.146$, $p=.080$). No other effects were found. See Figure 7.5.

Response to prompt "Describe how you see the average member of the opposing affiliation"

Response to the prompts "describe the average liberal" and "describe the average conservative" were recoded to create a measure of how participants described the average member of the opposing affiliation. After excluding participants who wrote less than 25 words, the final sample included 87 texts (mean word count = 49.6, SD = 23.00). As with earlier analyses, the relationship between fusion and affiliation was tested using a series of 2(fusion: fused vs. unfused) x 2(political affiliation: liberal vs. conservative) x identification (continuous) x the identification by affiliation interaction term ANCOVAs.

These analyses found few effects. The only significant effect found in these data was for identification, which was a significant predictor of the use of "I" language ($F(1,80) = 4.303$, $p<.05$). There was no significant effect found for fusion when identification was controlled for. See Figure 7.6.

Figure 7.6: Language use when describing average member of opposing group



DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to explore the relationship between identity fusion and behavior characteristic of extremism in the political realm. Although, as with earlier studies, the lack of a large population of fused participants posed some problems with testing this relationship, in general these analyses provide some support for the argument that fusion is related to political extremism.

Specific predictions

Prediction 1:

1. People who are fused with a particular ideology will be more likely to refuse to compromise their preferences on political issues.

This prediction was tested in analyses of two measures of issue voting. Initial analyses for both the overall importance placed on issues by participants and the number of issues participants report a refusal to compromise on support this prediction. In the first case, fusion was a significant predictor of the overall importance placed on issues. In the second case, although the main effect was not significant the interaction between fusion and affiliation approached significance. These effects were weak and inconsistent, in that when identification was entered into the analysis the effects for fusion as a predictor of overall response to the issues were no longer significant, and the interaction between fusion and affiliation for the number of issues for which participants refused to compromise was not actually significant.

These results do not strongly support the prediction of this study. However, the interaction between fusion and affiliation in the measure of the number of issues for

which participants refuse to compromise is intriguing, and should be followed up on with a larger sample and a more restricted definition of fusion to see if it appears again in another sample. This finding is interesting because contrary to prediction, it only appeared in conservatives. This may represent the kind of preference for rigid and uncompromising worldviews that has been hypothesized to characterize political conservativism (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003), but an alternative explanation is that it reflects the greater organization and shared perspectives in the modern American conservative movement (Micklethwait & Woolridge, 2004). With such unanimity, there might be more agreement that all the issues are important or at least shared agreement that many issues are important. In contrast, the diversity and lack of a unified perspective in the American liberal movements may lead fused liberals to focus on a smaller number of key issues.

Prediction 2:

2. People who are fused with a political ideology will endorse a more combative and less cooperative description of the political process.

This prediction was tested with the six item measure of combative politics. As with the analyses for impact of issues on voting decisions, these analyses found a significant effect for fusion when identification was not controlled for that went away when identification was entered into the analyses. Unlike the earlier finding, however, identification was not a significant predictor in the full ANCOVA. These data provide somewhat limited support for the prediction that fusion will lead to higher endorsement of combative politics, but do suggest that such a relationship exists (in that fusion was a

significant predictor when identification was not controlled for). The finding that conservatives are more inclined to endorse combative politics is interesting, and may relate to the hypothesized individual level correlates of conservativism identified by Jost and colleagues. However, the importance of context should not be overlooked: as in Study 2, the majority of these data were collected when conservatives controlled the American government, and this endorsement of combative politics may reflect the fact that the majority party gains the most by refusing to compromise.

Prediction 3:

3. There will be a stable difference between fused and unfused participants in the language used to describe those within and opposed to the group.

This prediction was tested through the LIWC analyses of texts written by participants. Earlier research in the linguistic correlates of extremism found a fingerprint of extremism characterized by a high use of "We," a low use of "I," high rates of negative emotion words, and many references to others. Because of this, the analyses focused on these linguistic categories. Not many significant effects were found for these categories, and those that were found were at odds with earlier research. Interestingly, fused participants did not use fewer "I" words when describing their affiliation in general or when describing the average member of their affiliation. In fact, in both cases fused participants used more "I" words than unfused (although the effect was only statistically significant in the first case). This effect was not what was predicted by earlier research. One possible explanation for the gap between this research and earlier research is found in the effects for identification. Identification was a significant predictor of "We"

language when participants were describing their own affiliation, and it is possible that the effects found in earlier research are attributable to the effects of identification. The fact that fused participants used more "I" language is interesting. Although it does not support the argument that fusion leads people to talk in extremist ways, it does suggest that fused participants responded to these linguistic prompts from a perspective which included the personal self. This is in line with the fundamental argument that fusion is related to a particularly strong association between the personal and social levels of the self-concept.

In general, the linguistic findings do not strongly support the prediction that fusion would be a stable predictor of linguistic differences. The differences found were inconsistent and did not appear across all three text samples analyzed.

General discussion

Taken together, these data provide inconsistent support for the predictions that identity fusion is predictive of rigid, uncompromising forms of political behavior such as would be expected to develop from extremist alignment with the group. Fused participants did show significantly a greater impact of issues on their voting decisions and more strongly endorsed a model of American politics which deemphasizes compromise in favor of a majoritarian perspective where the minority party plays no role in political decisionmaking, although both these effects disappeared when identification was controlled for. The linguistic data did not demonstrate a consistent difference between fused and unfused participants.

In general, Study 3 found interesting and evocative findings, but nothing consistent or stable enough to be considered genuinely strong evidence in line with predictions. More research is needed with a larger sample, so that a more restrictive definition of fusion can be used. It is possible that some of the weak effects found in this study may be more robust when such a sample is collected.

Chapter 8: General Discussion

Until recently, social psychology as a field was not particularly focused on questions relating to extremism. While that has changed somewhat, the fact remains that research in the psychology of extremism is currently underdeveloped. Existing research has focused on describing the psychological state of extremism and the definition of the extremism used in this dissertation (which defines extremism in terms of the perceived moral authority of the group, an absolutist perspective on the group's teachings, and a sense of threat) represents the developing general consensus across this work. While there is such a consensus as to what characterizes extremism, there is no such consensus (and in fact, very little research) as to what psychological processes may lead to this state.

Most of the existing research has tended to focus on either real or perceived intergroup conflict or some form of social identity processes as underlying the development of extremism. The body of evidence is tilting towards the argument that while group conflict may play a role in developing intergroup stereotyping, extremism itself is strongly related to social identity processes (e.g. Glaser, Dixit, & Green, 2002). This suggests that something about the formation or structure of the self-concept is leading to the development of extremism.

Research into the developing construct of identity fusion (Swann, Seyle, Gomez, Morales, & Huici, 2007) has provided an approach to explaining the psychology of extremism. Traditional research in social identity has argued that the self-concept is composed of separate but related cognitive schema which contain information about ourselves as individuals distinct from others (personal self-views) as well as information about ourselves as members of groups (social self-views). In most people, these different elements of the self-concept are assumed to be distinct and (although interconnected)

capable of being activated more or less independently (Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991). The identity fusion approach argues that for some people, the connections between the self as an individual and the perceptions of the self as a member of a group may become so strong that the activation of one element of the self may prime the activation of the other level of the self. Rather than being distinct, the different elements of the self-concept may be "fused." In this case, the fused person should draw fairly little distinction between the self as an individual and the group. This state of identity fusion is hypothesized to be an outgrowth of self-verification motives: when a person needs verification of his or her existing self-views, a group which provides a social prototype that supports these self-views will be extremely attractive (Swann, Polzer, Seyle, & Ko, 2004), and if it provides verification for enough of the self-views or strong enough verification for the central self-views in question, the person may construct his or her self-concept in such a way that fusion is the result.

This hypothesized state of identity fusion provides a theoretical model which fits neatly with the observed criteria that define extremism. If group members saw little distinction between themselves as an individual and the group, then self-relevant processes would tend to lead them to see the group in moral terms, self-verification processes would predict the absolutist defense of the group, and the interaction between these two processes would contribute to the development of a sense of threat. There are therefore good theoretical which suggest that identity fusion may be a useful model for describing the psychology of extremism.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This research in this dissertation attempted to test this theoretical connection between fusion and extremism through a series of three studies. Study 1 examined the hypothesized connection between self-verification and identity fusion in political

affiliations. This study explored the motivational pathways that may lead someone to become an extremist. Study 2 examined the cognitive effects of identity fusion and the connections between these effects and extremism. Research on the Sacred Value Protection Model (Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000) has identified a particular type of cognitive rigidity associated with the protection of key values that provides an excellent description of the cognitive patterns associated with extremism. Study 2 argued that if extremism is associated with identity fusion, then identity fusion should predict the rejection of counterattitudinal messages associated with the Sacred Value Protection Model. Study 3 examined the self-reported behavioral effects of identity fusion and the association between fusion and extremist patterns of behavior, including language use. Taken together, these three studies attempted to lay out the motivational, cognitive, and behavioral correlates of fusion with a political affiliation and draw connections between these correlates and political extremism.

The findings of these three studies were mixed. There was little support for the argument that identity fusion with political groups was the result of verification motives in this sample. In Study 1, verification manipulations effectively changed the participants' emotional reaction to the study but failed to encourage the development of identity fusion even when participants were placed in groups which primed their political affiliations. These manipulations did not increase fusion with the group, however. The cognitive connections between fusion and extremism were more strongly supported. The results of Study 2 show that fusion predicted resistance to many of the political counterfactuals which ran contrary to the beliefs of the fused group, moral outrage or rejection of the person making such arguments, and anger as a response to the arguments. While the effects were somewhat inconsistent in that they did not appear across all measures or equally across anticonservative and antiliberal counterfactuals, in general the

findings supported the argument that fused participants showed cognitive responses which mirrored those of extremists to political counterfactuals, and that these effects were extant even though traditional identification measures were controlled for.

The tests of the behavioral effects of fusion likewise showed very weak effects. In Study 3, fused participants indicated a greater response to items assessing political extremism than unfused participants, but this finding tended to disappear when identification was controlled for.

In general, the results of these three studies suggest that identity fusion may describe the psychological underpinnings of the state of extremism, but the picture drawn from the data is not completely clear. It appears that the identity fusion measure is associated with cognitive responses that are in line with what is expected from extremists, These results do not, however, support the motivational argument that identity fusion is an outgrowth of self-verification motives. Past research in identity fusion has demonstrated that people who are fused can use feedback at the social level of the self-concept to meet verification needs at the personal level of the self (Swann, Seyle, Gomez, Morales, & Huici, 2007), but the motivational connection moving in the other direction is as yet unestablished and this research does not provide strong evidence for such a connection. While it is possible that this is related to the generally anemic response the participants had towards these political groups or the specific manipulation of online discussion, it is also possible that the connection between verification motives and fusion is strongest in people who are already fused rather than playing a major role in the development of fusion itself. It is also the case that the predicted relationship between fusion and extremist behaviors was not strongly supported.

FLAWS IN EXISTING RESEARCH

There were several problems with the research which weaken the potential strength of these findings. The two major flaws are the lack of a large sample of fused participants when using the strict definition of fusion and the generally lackadaisical response of participants to the political measures in general. Both of these flaws are likely related to the fact that the samples used were composed largely of young people, who tend to display overall low levels of political interest and engagement (Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli Carpini, 2006). While there were people from a fairly wide age range in all three studies, in general the prototypical participant was fairly young and fairly uninvested in politics. The result is that many participants showed low rates of fusion and identification with the group. The broader definition of fusion used here addressed the statistical problems associated with such a small number of fused participants, but added significant noise to the analysis that probably obscured significant effects.

Similarly, the lack of interest in politics may have hidden some effects attributable to fusion. The core argument that connects verification motives to identity fusion is the idea that when a group is seen as relevant to the self and containing implications which fit with existing self-views, that group will be attractive as a source of self-verification needs. If the participants in these studies failed to see political affiliation as being a particularly relevant group to them, then the materials used in these studies would likely fail to evoke strong responses. This would have the effect of reducing the overall impact of the studies, and concealing any real effects between fusion and the focus of the studies. The overall result of this flaw is that while the existing effects are likely to be replicable, there is a good possibility that other effects exist as well which cannot be measured with this specific set of studies.

There is also the general problem of generalizability. Since these studies focused on political behavior, and there are strong generational differences in political behavior (Zukin et al. 2006), the fact that the sample as a whole was very young poses a problem in generalizing from this sample to others. However, the connections between the identity fusion and pro-group behavior have been demonstrated in more diverse populations (Swann, Seyle, Gomez, Morales, & Huici, 2007), suggesting that the specific effects associated with identity fusion in these studies may be likely to generalize even though the focus was on the political domain.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this research was to advance the understanding of the psychology of extremism by exploring the connections between extremism and self-related constructs, particularly identity fusion. By developing a greater understanding of the psychology of extremism, the field of psychology can develop insights into the motivations that lead individuals to develop extremist patterns of alignment with the group, help to identify what characteristics of a group may encourage extremism, help to predict which groups may be supporting the kinds of behaviors associated with violent extremism, and contribute to research on the negotiation with extremist groups and members of extremist groups. This research contributes to this overall goal by demonstrating the connections between identity fusion and the state of extremism.

Some specific implications that arise from this work suggest that researchers in the psychology of extremism should develop an appreciation of the role of the self-concept in explaining phenomena associated with extremism. Research on real-world extremist organizations should focus on the role of these organizations in meeting specific self-related needs for their members, and attempts to reduce the formation of

these groups should focus on developing alternative methods that potential group members can use to meet these needs.

Future research is necessary to explore and more fully lay out the relationship between identification, identity fusion, and extremism. Future research should replicate the findings of Studies 2 and 3 using a larger sample of more politically committed participants, so that there will be a strong representation of fused participants. Replications of Study 1 using a more significant manipulation of social group than just online discussions would also be useful. Additional research is particularly needed to identify the relationship between self-verification needs and identity fusion, and should focus on using a variety of different groups or groups which have been pre-selected to match the self-views of the participants in the study.

Taken as a whole, this dissertation provides one approach to defining the state of extremism and one potential explanation of the underlying psychology. While the data are not completely uniform in supporting this explanation, they do provide interesting support for the argument that extremism is related to identity fusion concerns. More research is necessary, but this approach may continue to serve as an effective model for understanding extremism in the future.

Appendix A: Measuring Fusion

Identity fusion is theorized to exist as a particular psychological state in which the connection between the personal and social levels of the self-concept are strong enough that there is functionally or activationally little difference between the two of them. The identity fusion scale is one attempt to assess this state, based on Aron's research in the pictorial assessment of the self-concept which demonstrates that similar scales do accurately measure the relationship between different aspects of the self (e.g. Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991). The state of fusion is theorized to be a binary state: although associations between the personal and the social self can vary in strength, if fusion is considered a condition in which there is functionally no difference between the two then it should be best considered as a binary condition in which either participants are fused and there is no difference, or they are not and some difference exists. Given that the identity fusion scale is a continuous measure, this poses a question of psychometrics: what is the most appropriate way to define this categorical state of fusion from this continuous measure?

Existing research has used three separate approaches to defining fusion from the identity fusion scale. The approach which shows the strongest face validity and theoretical support is defining fusion as a response of "E" on the identity fusion scale (see Figure 4.1. By placing the "self" circle within the large circle of the group, option E shows the strongest degree of association between the self and the group and corresponds most closely to the theoretical definition of fusion. This is the definition which most

existing research uses for the majority of analyses (e.g. Swann, Seyle, Gomez, Morales, & Huici, 2007). There is a practical problem with this, however: as should be expected if fusion really does represent a powerful psychological state and one related to extremism, the rates of people selecting response E in the US is relatively rare. While research conducted in Spain (a collectivistic culture more comfortable drawing associations between the self and the group) has found rates of fusion with the national identity that average between 25 and 30 percent (Swann, Seyle, Gomez, Morales, & Huici, 2007), research on similar national identification in the United States has found rates closer to 7 percent (Seyle & Swann, 2005). The usage of response E in the studies presented in this dissertation was particularly low (most likely attributable to the fact that the groups focused on were not particularly relevant to the majority of participants in the studies): rates of this response varied from 5.1% in Study 1 to 8.1% in Study 3. While this low response rate is in line with what should be expected if fusion really is associated with extremism (as extremism is a rare psychological state), this poses significant problems for the analyses: without a large sample, there are many questions which cannot be effectively answered.

A second approach to defining fusion which has been used before (e.g. Seyle & Swann, 2006) is to define fusion as a response of D or E on the identity fusion scale. The primary reason for this is that while response E shows the most theoretical validity, there is the psychometric issue that some people are more inclined in general to use the extremes of scales, while others avoid them (e.g. Johnson, Kulesa, Cho, & Shavitt, 2005). If this is the case, then it is possible that a certain proportion of fused participants are

avoiding selecting response E out of this kind of response bias or just general measurement noise. Therefore, while almost everyone who selects E is very likely to be fused, there's also the possibility that many people who are fused are not selecting E. By lowering the breakpoint for fusion to response D, researchers are likely to accurately categorize the vast majority of fused participants by catching those fused participants who did not select E. Such a categorization will inevitably increase the number of non-fused participants incorrectly categorized as fused, but as the result of this will be to increase the variance of the fused group and obscure any real effects for fusion rather than encourage Type I error this is not as critical of an issue as it could be if the effect worked in the other direction.

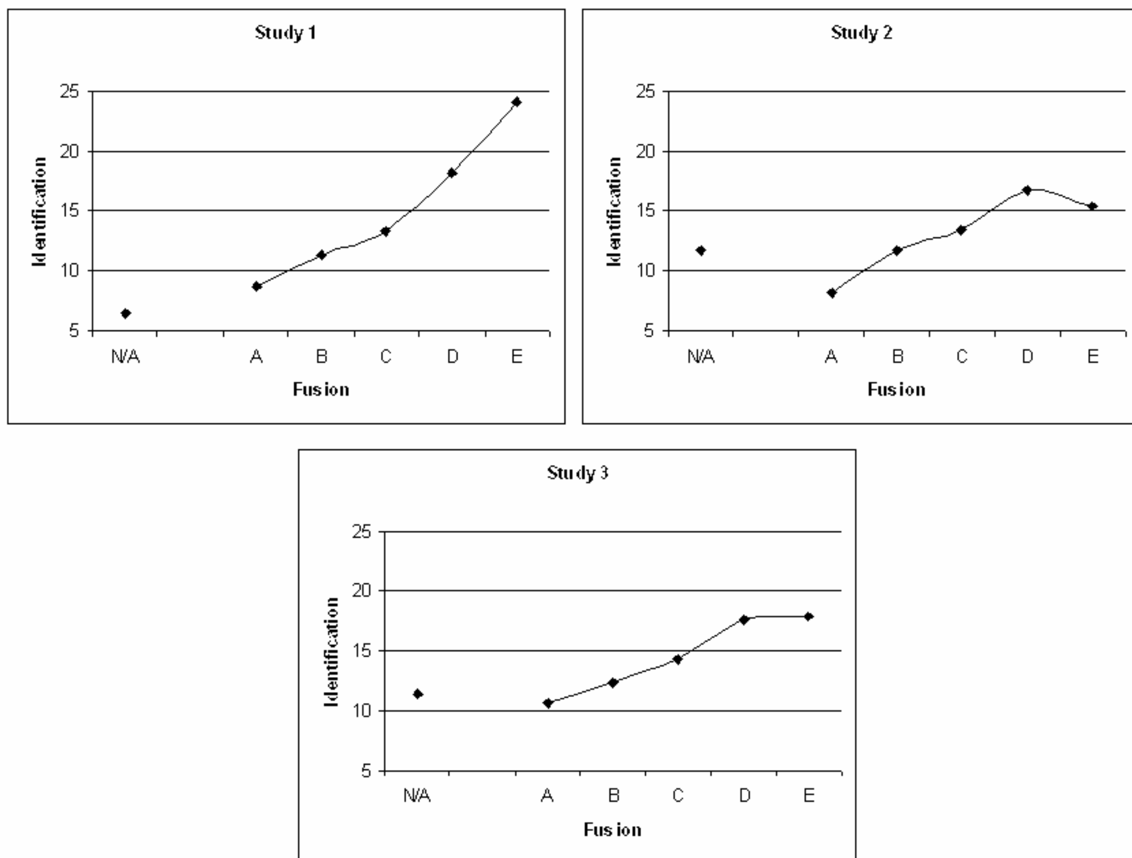
This theoretical justification is based on the idea that E is the strongest way of capturing fused participants, but D may be almost as strong. If this is the case, there should be a significant drop-off in the strength of the fusion scale in predicting dependent variables between C and D. The relationship between the fusion scale and other measures should not be a linear relationship, but rather sigmoidal, with a break between responses A-C and responses D and E. If such a pattern is found, creating the fused categorization at response D and E may be a legitimate approach. Research in Spain has tended to show a sigmoidal response with a break between C and D but a larger and more significant break between D and E (Swann, Seyle, Gomez, Morales, & Huici, 2007). Research in the US has tended to show less of a difference between D and E and a stronger gap between C and D (Seyle & Swann, 2005).

A third approach that has been used very rarely treats the identity fusion scale as a continuous measure (Swann, Seyle, Gomez, Morales, & Huici, 2007, Study 1). If fusion is a binary state, this is psychometrically less valid than the other approaches. If, however, fusion is best conceptualized as a spectrum of association between the personal and social self-view ranging from not fused to completely fused then the sigmoidal shape described above should not found in the association between fusion and other measures and treating the identity fusion scale as a continuous measure might be appropriate.

The very small numbers of participants answering E on the identity fusion scale in the studies presented in this dissertation posed a problem for analysis. While this is the strongest way to categorize fusion, a lack of fused participants using this definition meant that many of the analyses were either impossible to run or unreliable. Because of this, the alternate definitions fusion discussed here were considered. In order to determine if it was more appropriate to consider fusion as a dichotomous variable with a cutoff at response D or treat it as a continuous variable, I looked at the association between fusion and other measures in the three studies. Because the state of fusion is assumed to be associated with a high degree of identification and in order to make the analyses comparable across all three studies, I compared the response of participants on the identity fusion scale to their response on the organizational identification questionnaire by computing an ANOVA for each study treating the identity fusion scale as a single 6-level factor. In all three studies, these analyses demonstrated a roughly sigmoidal shape in line with the idea that fusion is a dichotomous state, not a continuous variable. Results for these analyses are shown in Figure A.1. In Study 1, the overall ANOVA is significant

(F(6,346)= 21.4, p<.001) and Tukey post-hoc tests show that response D is significantly higher than responses A-C (p's <.01) but significantly lower than response E (p<.01). For Studies 2 and 3 the overall comparisons are likewise significant (F(4,180) = 11.967, F(4,190) = 15.17, respectively. p's<.001). In Study 2, response D is significantly higher than responses A-C (p's <.001) but not significantly different from response E, which is itself higher than all other conditions except C and D (p's<.001). In Study 3, there was no significant difference between participants who responded with D or E, but both D and E were significantly higher than all other groups (p's<.01).

Figure A.1: Identification scores across responses to the fusion scale



These results are in keeping with findings from earlier studies, which support the argument that fusion is a dichotomous state best operationally defined as a response at the high end of the identity fusion scale, not as a continuous measurement on the identity fusion scale. Research with Spanish participants has consistently supported a similar finding that the response across the fusion scale is not a smooth, continuous increase, but instead driven by the responses at the higher ends of the scale, in that Spanish participants tend to draw a sharp distinction between the high ends of the fusion scale and the middle parts of the scale (Swann, Seyle, Gomez, Morales, & Huici, 2007). Given this, it is most appropriate to treat fusion as a categorical variable. While selecting only those who responded E on the fusion scale is still the most rigorous definition of fusion, in the case of these studies this would pose serious analytical problems. The analyses here suggest that the next best approach is to define fusion as a score of either D or E on the identity fusion scale. The analyses presented in this dissertation take this form.

ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN FUSION AND OTHER PSYCHOLOGICAL VARIABLES

In order to develop a picture of how fusion is associated with other variables, the data across all three studies were combined and the relationship between fusion, age, gender, and identification with the group was assessed. Theoretically, fusion should be unrelated to either gender or age, but associated with identification. In the case of age, this was assessed with a t-test, which found no significant difference between fused and unfused participants ($t(732) = .385$). See Figure A.2. In the case of gender, this was assessed with a binary logistic regression including gender as a predictor and fusion as the dependent variable. Although women show a slightly higher rate of fusion than men, this difference was not significant ($OR = 1.368$, $p=.063$). See Figure A.3.

Figure A.2: Age across fusion

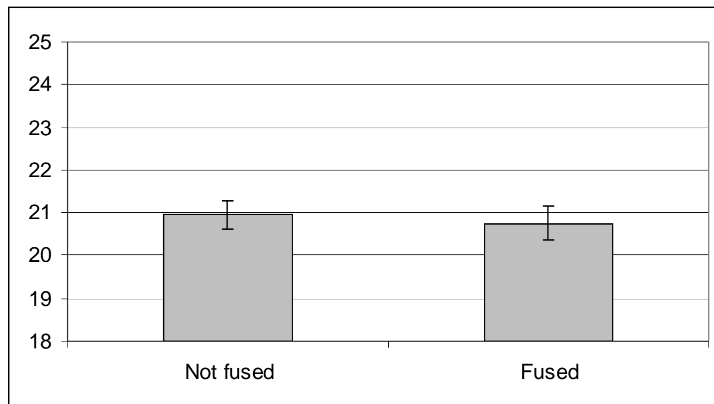
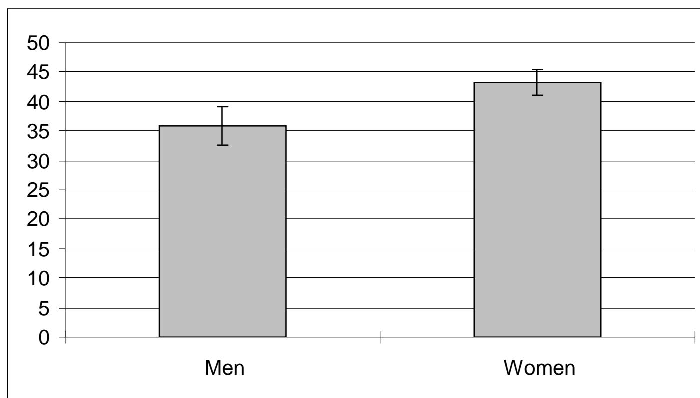


Figure A.3: Percent fused across gender

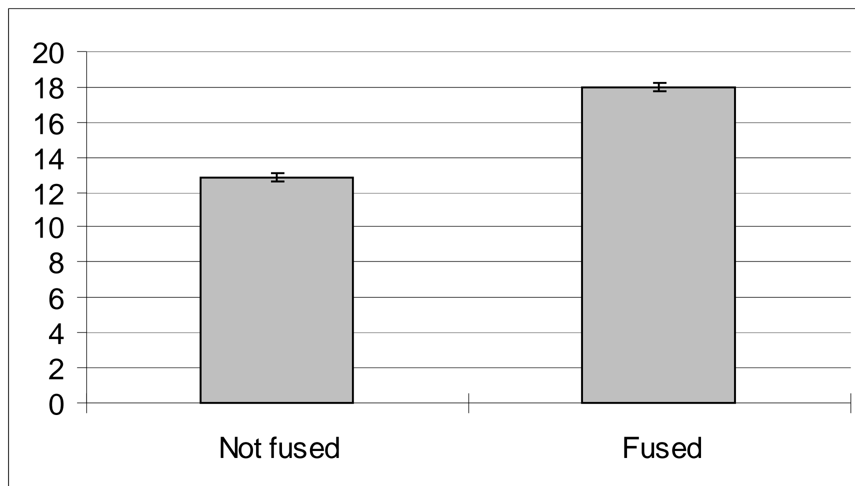


Identification was tested with a t-test, which found that fused participants showed significantly higher rates of identification with their self-identified political affiliation than nonfused participants ($t(729) = -15.35$, $p<.001$). See Figure A.4. This is consistent with the theoretical argument that fusion represents a particularly strong form of association with the group. Identification with the group is a measure of how much a particular group is important to the respondent, and how much the respondent sees that group as being significant to their life. Because of this, it is expected that fused participants (who are argued to see the group as being an externalization of the self)

should show high rates of identification. This analysis found the predicted relationship between fusion and identification.

Although fusion is associated with identification, it is distinct in several key ways. Identification represents a cognitive, explicit awareness that the group is important to the group member. Fusion, conceptualized as a state in which the boundaries between the self and the group become blurred, is theorized to be a much stronger state more associated with affective and noncognitive affiliation with the group. Although fusion presupposes a high degree of identification (as found in this analysis), it is conceptualized to be distinct and likely more powerful in terms of the results it evokes. In order to test this assumption, analyses in this dissertation controlled for identification to determine to what degree this theorized distinction between the two constructs was found in the data.

Figure A.4: Identification across fusion



Appendix B: Political Discussions in Study 1

CONSERVATIVE DISCUSSION

MJOates	If you really think about it, Bush has not really done anything _that_ bad as a president. I think that taking a stance on the war and actually doing something about it shows that he is a strong president, and I feel safe with him defending our country against terrorists.
Wilde	He is fighting for what he believes in and that I admire. A man that can stand up and live and breath his own morals is rare and something most people can't admit doing. He has represented the US well and I really appreciate him not accepting this nonsense about gay-marriage. Bush is probably the greatest role model this country has.
Allie	I don't really care very much. I don't pay any attention to politics. Their all the same anway. It doesn't matter who is in charge
HU07	I'm pretty conservative, but I actually don't like the guy very much. In theory, I agree with his politics but I don't like the way that he's been running his administration. It seems like he's putting loyalty over competence, and ignoring huge problems with America (immigration? Hello?). Plus, he ran as an isolationist but his foreign policy is getting us involved with too much stuff internationally.
rigmarole	I like how the president supports business and the economy. He realizes that the key to a strong country is a strong economy. I remember during his first term when there were enormous numbers of layoffs after the tech bubble burst--he extended unemployment benefits for many people affected (including me). That really helped me get by.
Sally08	I agree. I think the President is doing a great job, despite all the anti-American bullshit he has to put up with.

LIBERAL DISCUSSION

MJOates	That guy gives me the creeps whenever I see him on TV. Constantly making a fool of himself and building a horrible image of the US. I really hate this war, his stance on gay marriage, and how he knows absolutely nothing about the youth of america. Take this net-neutrality issue--if he wasn't so big business he would have encouraged our senate to not even consider such bull.
Wilde	The main problem with President Bush is that he ignores the needs of 98% of the population in order to please his supporters, the wealthiest 2% of the nation. I also dislike how he embraces really dumb policies, like abstinence-only sex ed in public schools--more teens are getting pregnant and getting stds under this policy because they keep having sex but they're not informed about how to be safe. Overall, he's just really unlikeable.
Allie	I don't really care very much. I don't pay any attention to politics. Their all the same anway. It doesn't matter who is in charge
HU07	He's not all bad. He's been pretty solid on gay rights, considering the pressures around him -- look how he headed off the gay marriage amendment thing. Declared himself leading the charge, and then killed it. And Condi Rice and Dick Cheney are probably the most gay positive high-profile people in an administration ever.
rigmarole	Two wars, countless human rights abuses, and the ecomony and environment going into the toilet. Yeehaw!
Sally08	I agree. I think that Bush is just too conservative for America, and I think he lies a lot.

Appendix C: Materials Used in Study 2

COUNTERFACTUALS AND RESISTANCE MEASURES

Political condition

We are interested in people's perceptions of political arguments. Specifically, we are interested in people's thinking about "what-ifs" of different political opinions: what people think should be done in a variety of different situations. For each "what-if" we will ask you how easy or difficult it is to imagine that the starting point for the "what-if" could be true, and how easy or difficult it is to believe the proposed effect would happen if that starting point was true. Some of the "what-if" statements may appear to be obviously true to you, and you may find some of them to be controversial. Please answer as best as you can.

1. Consider the argument that if the United States is shown to have acted immorally (by mistakenly killing innocent people or supporting genocide, for example), the United States should not be looked to as a moral nation.

   1a. How easy or difficult is it to imagine that the starting point for this argument could have been true? Is it easy or difficult to accept the premise that the U.S. may have acted immorally at some point in the past or will in the future?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Extremely easy				Neither easy nor difficult				Extremely difficult

   1b. Assuming, just for the sake of argument that the starting point is reasonable (putting aside your personal views on the subject), how easy or difficult is it to imagine the consequences following? Assuming that if the U.S. is shown to have acted immorally, does it follow in your mind that the U.S. should not be seen as a moral nation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Extremely easy				Neither easy nor difficult				Extremely difficult

2. Consider the argument that if racial profiling is shown to be an effective means of preventing crime without placing an undue burden on targeted groups, then law enforcement should engage in racial profiling.

    2a. How easy or difficult is it to imagine that the starting point for this argument could have been true? Is it easy or difficult to accept the premise that racial profiling may be shown to be an effective means of preventing crime without placing an undue burden on targeted groups?

    2b. Assuming, just for the sake of argument that the starting point is reasonable (putting aside your personal views on the subject), how easy or difficult is it to imagine the consequences following? Assuming that if racial profiling is shown to be an effective way of preventing crime without placing an undue burden on targeted groups, does it follow in your mind that law enforcement should engage in racial profiling?

3. Consider the argument that if someone is born into an environment that does not provide opportunities for advancement, then that person will not be unable to escape that environment.

    3a. How easy or difficult is it to imagine that the starting point for this argument could have been true? Is it easy or difficult to accept the premise that someone might be born into an environment that does not provide opportunities for advancement?

    3b. Assuming, just for the sake of argument that the starting point is reasonable (putting aside your personal views on the subject), how easy or difficult is it to imagine the consequences following? Assuming that if someone is born into an environment without opportunities for advancement, does it follow in you mind that that person will be unable to escape that environment?

4. Consider the argument that if an unprovoked attack on another nation is shown to be the only way to stop an immoral action (such as genocide) in another country, then the U.S. should launch an unprovoked attack.

    4a. How easy or difficult is it to imagine that the starting point for this argument could have been true? Is it easy or difficult to accept the premise that an unprovoked attack may be the only way to stop an immoral action?

    4b. Assuming, just for the sake of argument that the starting point is reasonable (putting aside your personal views on the subject), how easy or difficult is it to imagine the consequences following? Assuming that if an unprovoked attack is the only way to stop an immoral action in another country, does it follow in your mind that the U.S. should launch an attack?

5. Consider the argument that if a traditional two-parent family includes parents who treat their child very poorly, that child would be better off in a nontraditional family who care for the child.

   5a. How easy or difficult is it to imagine that the starting point for this argument could have been true? Is it easy or difficult to accept the premise that traditional family structures may include parents who treat their children poorly?

   5b. Assuming, just for the sake of argument that the starting point is reasonable (putting aside your personal views on the subject), how easy or difficult is it to imagine the consequences following? Assuming that if a traditional family structure is shown to include parents who mistreat the child, does it follow in your mind that the child would be better off in a nontraditional family who cares for the child?

6. Consider the argument that if a pure free-market capitalistic approach (which includes no social programs such as welfare or social security) is shown to be the best way to improve the overall standard of living in the U.S., then the United States should end social programs such as welfare and reduce regulation of corporations and businesses.

   6a. How easy or difficult is it to imagine that the starting point for this argument could have been true? Is it easy or difficult to accept the premise a pure free-market approach would be the best way to improve the overall standard of living in the United States?

   6b. Assuming, just for the sake of argument that the starting point is reasonable (putting aside your personal views on the subject), how easy or difficult is it to imagine the consequences following? Assuming that if a pure free-market approach is shown to be the best way to improve the standard of living, does it follow in your mind that the U.S. should end social programs and reduce regulation of corporations?

7. Consider the argument that if the government is unable to accomplish all its obligations without raising taxes, then the government should raise taxes.

   7a. How easy or difficult is it to imagine that the starting point for this argument could have been true? Is it easy or difficult to accept the premise that the government may be unable to accomplish all its obligations without raising taxed?

   7b. Assuming, just for the sake of argument that the starting point is reasonable (putting aside your personal views on the subject), how easy or difficult is it to imagine the consequences following? Assuming that if the government is

unable to accomplish its obligations without raising taxed, does it follow in your mind that the government should then raise taxes?

8. Consider the argument that if it is shown that laws allowing individuals to more easily buy and carry handguns reduce crime without appreciably increasing accidental deaths, then the government should make it easier to buy and carry handguns.

   8a. How easy or difficult is it to imagine that the starting point for this argument could have been true? Is it easy or difficult to accept the premise that making it easier to buy or carry handguns will reduce crime without appreciably increasing accidental deaths.

   8b. Assuming, just for the sake of argument that the starting point is reasonable (putting aside your personal views on the subject), how easy or difficult is it to imagine the consequences following? Assuming that if it is shown that making it easier to buy and carry handguns reduces crime without increasing accidental deaths, does it follow in your mind that the government should make it easier to buy and carry handguns?

Nonpolitical condition

We are interested in people's perceptions of some different causal arguments (arguments about how things may happen). Specifically, we are interested in people's thinking about "what-ifs": what perceptions people have of how events may conceivably work out differently if the starting point is different. Please answer each of the following questions. For each "what-if" we will ask you how easy or difficult it is to imagine that the starting point for the "what-if" could be true, and how easy or difficult it is to imagine what might have happened differently if that starting point is true. Some of the "what-if" statements may appear to be obviously true to you, and you may find some of them to be controversial. Please answer as best as you can.

1. Consider the argument that if an organization formerly seen as a moral organization was found to have acted immorally, then that organization should not be seen as a moral group.

   1a. How easy or difficult is it to imagine that the starting point for this argument could have been true? Is it easy or difficult to accept the premise that an organization seen as moral may be found to have acted imorally?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Extremely easy				Neither easy nor difficult				Extremely difficult

1b. Assuming, just for the sake of argument that the starting point is reasonable (putting aside your personal views on the subject), how easy or difficult is it to imagine the consequences following? Assuming that if the an organization is found to have acted immorally, does it follow in your mind that the group should not be seen as moral?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Extremely easy				Neither easy nor difficult				Extremely difficult

2. Consider the argument that if a person does not have the opportunity to learn to perform some action, they will not be able to successfully perform that action.

2a. How easy or difficult is it to imagine that the starting point for this argument could have been true? Is it easy or difficult to accept the premise that someone may not have the chance to learn to perform some action?

2b. Assuming, just for the sake of argument that the starting point is reasonable (putting aside your personal views on the subject), how easy or difficult is it to imagine the consequences following? Assuming that if someone does not have the chance to learn to perform some action, does it follow in your mind that they will not be able to successfully perform that action?

3. Consider the argument that if some group or organization is not performing well at some task, then a different group organized in a different fashion may perform better.

3a. How easy or difficult is it to imagine that the starting point for this argument could have been true? Is it easy or difficult to accept the premise that a group or organization may not perform well at some task?

3b. Assuming, just for the sake of argument that the starting point is reasonable (putting aside your personal views on the subject), how easy or difficult is it to imagine the consequences following? Assuming that if a group or organization is not performing well at a task, does it follow in your mind that a group or organization organized along different lines may perform better?

4. Consider the argument that if a group or organization cannot meet their obligations with the funding they already have, then the group should raise the money..

4a. How easy or difficult is it to imagine that the starting point for this argument could have been true? Is it easy or difficult to accept the premise that a group

or organization may be unable to meet their obligations with the funding they have?

4b. Assuming, just for the sake of argument that the starting point is reasonable (putting aside your personal views on the subject), how easy or difficult is it to imagine the consequences following? Assuming that if there is a group that can't meet their obligations with the funding they have, does it follow in your mind that the group should raise the money?

5. Consider the argument that if an organization has the opportunity to stop immoral behavior in another group, then that organization should act to stop this behavior.

5a. How easy or difficult is it to imagine that the starting point for this argument could have been true? Is it easy or difficult to accept the premise that an organization may have the opportunity to stop immoral behavior in another group?

5b. Assuming, just for the sake of argument that the starting point is reasonable (putting aside your personal views on the subject), how easy or difficult is it to imagine the consequences following? Assuming that if an organization does have the chance to stop immoral behavior in another group, does it follow in your mind that the organization should act to stop this behavior?

6. Consider the argument that if a group knows an effective way to accomplish its goals, then that group should use this method.

6a. How easy or difficult is it to imagine that the starting point for this argument could have been true? Is it easy or difficult to accept the premise that a group may know an effective way of accomplishing its goals?

6b. Assuming, just for the sake of argument that the starting point is reasonable (putting aside your personal views on the subject), how easy or difficult is it to imagine the consequences following? Assuming that if a group does have an effective means of accomplishing its goals, does it follow in your mind that the group should use this method?

7. Consider the argument that if regulations hinder or prevent a beneficial outcome, then the government should remover those regulations.

7a. How easy or difficult is it to imagine that the starting point for this argument could have been true? Is it easy or difficult to accept the premise that regulations may hinder or prevent a beneficial outcome?

7b. Assuming, just for the sake of argument that the starting point is reasonable (putting aside your personal views on the subject), how easy or difficult is it to

imagine the consequences following? Assuming that if regulations do hinder or prevent a beneficial outcome, does it follow in your mind that the government should remove these regulations?

8. Consider the argument that if research shows that resistance to some proposed policy or law is based on incorrect information about the effects of this policy, then resistance should stop.

   8a. How easy or difficult is it to imagine that the starting point for this argument could have been true? Is it easy or difficult to accept the premise that resistance to some proposed policy or law could be based on incorrect information about that policy's effects?

   8b. Assuming, just for the sake of argument that the starting point is reasonable (putting aside your personal views on the subject), how easy or difficult is it to imagine the consequences following? Assuming that if it is shown that resistance to a law or policy is based on incorrect information about the effects of that law or policy, does it follow in your mind that the resistance should then stop?

MORAL OUTRAGE AND EMOTION MEASURES

Political condition

Now, we would like you to consider your response to an author who wrote a book endorsing each of the "what-if" statements regarding political opinions. For each statement, we will ask you to consider what your response would be to a book that argued that the "what-if" statement was true.

1. What would you think about somebody who wrote a book endorsing the idea that the U.S. had behaved immorally and should not be seen as a moral nation?

Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements

1. This person is likely to admire people who disagree with him or her

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Completely disagree				Unsure				Completely agree

2. This person is likely to have contempt for people who disagree with him or her

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Completely disagree				Unsure				Completely agree

3. This person displays a great understanding of American history

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Completely disagree				Unsure				Completely agree

4. I would seek out this person's company.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Completely disagree				Unsure				Completely agree

5. My emotional reaction to this argument is:

a. Anger

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Disagree strongly				unsure				Agree strongly

b. Sorrow

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Disagree strongly				unsure				Agree strongly

c. Disappointment

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Disagree strongly				unsure				Agree strongly

d. Hope

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Disagree strongly				unsure				Agree strongly

2. What would you think about somebody who wrote a book endorsing the idea that racial profiling is an effective means of preventing crime without placing an undue burden on targeted groups, and that law enforcement should engage in racial profiling?

3. What would you think about somebody who wrote a book arguing that people who born into environments without opportunities will not be able to escape those environments?

4. What would you think about somebody who wrote a book arguing that an unprovoked attack is the only way to stop an immoral action, and the U.S. should therefore launch an unprovoked attack?

5. What would you think about somebody who wrote a book arguing that if a traditional two-parent family includes parents who treat their child very poorly, that child would be better off in a nontraditional family who care for the child?

6. What would you think about somebody who wrote a book arguing that a pure free-market capitalistic approach (which includes no social programs such as welfare or social security) is the best way to improve the overall standard of living in the U.S., and that the United States should end social programs such as welfare and reduce regulation of corporations and businesses?

7. What would you think about somebody who wrote a book arguing that the government is unable to accomplish all its obligations without raising taxes, and should raise taxes?

8. What would you think about somebody who wrote a book arguing that laws allowing individuals to more easily buy and carry handguns reduce crime without appreciably increasing accidental deaths, and the government should make it easier to buy and carry handguns?

Nonpolitical condition

Now, we would like you to consider your response to an author who wrote a book endorsing each of the "what-if" statements. For each statement, we will ask you to consider what your response would be to a book that argued that the "what-if" statement was true.

1. What would you think about somebody who wrote a book endorsing the idea that if an organization formerly seen as a moral organization was found to have acted immorally, then that organization should not be seen as a moral group?

Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements

1. This person is likely to admire people who disagree with him or her

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Completely disagree				Unsure				Completely agree

2. This person is likely to have contempt for people who disagree with him or her

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Completely disagree				Unsure				Completely agree

3. This person displays a great understanding of American history

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Completely disagree				Unsure				Completely agree

4. I would seek out this person's company.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Completely disagree				Unsure				Completely agree

5. My emotional reaction to this argument is:

a. Anger

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Disagree strongly				unsure				Agree strongly

b. Sorrow

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Disagree strongly				unsure				Agree strongly

c. Disappointment

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Disagree strongly				unsure				Agree strongly

d. Hope

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Disagree strongly				unsure				Agree strongly

2. What would you think about somebody who wrote a book endorsing the idea that that if a person does not have the opportunity to learn to perform some action, they will not be able to successfully perform that action?

3. What would you think about somebody who wrote a book arguing that if research shows that resistance to some proposed policy or law is based on incorrect information about the effects of this policy, then resistance should stop?

4. What would you think about somebody who wrote a book arguing that if some group or organization is not performing well at some task, then a different group organized in a different fashion may perform better?

5. What would you think about somebody who wrote a book arguing that if a group or organization cannot meet their obligations with the funding they already have, then the group should raise the money?

6. What would you think about somebody who wrote a book arguing that if an organization has the opportunity to stop immoral behavior in another group, then that organization should act to stop this behavior?

7. What would you think about somebody who wrote a book arguing that if a group knows an effective way to accomplish its goals, then that group should use this method?

8. What would you think about somebody who wrote a book arguing that if regulations hinder or prevent a beneficial outcome, then the government should remover those regulations?

MORAL CLEANSING MEASURE

Please respond to the next few items using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Certain no				Unsure				Certain yes

1. How likely are you to vote in the next presidential election?
2. How likely are you to vote in the next national election?
3. How likely are you to vote in the next state election?
4. How likely are you to donate money to your political party in the next two years?
5. How likely are you to volunteer for a political party or candidate in the next two years?
6. How likely are you to run for local, state, or national office in the next five years?

Appendix D: Materials used in Study 3

LINGUISTIC MEASURES:

Now, we would like you to think about your political affiliation and your answers to some of the earlier questions. For each of the following questions, write as much as you need to answer the question fully. Please try and explain your answer as thoroughly as possible

1. What does the group the participant's self-identified affiliation mean to you?
2. On the last page, you selected this response: participant's response on the identity fusion scale. Why did you select that? What did that picture mean to you?
3. Describe how you see the average conservative. What makes the average conservative see him or herself as conservative?
4. Describe how you see the average liberal. What makes the average liberal see him or herself as liberal?
5. Describe how you see conservatives as a group.
6. Describe how you see liberals as a group.

IMPACT OF ISSUES ON VOTING DECISIONS MEASURE

Now we would like to ask you some questions about your political decisions. Please imagine that you are deciding whether to vote for a candidate or not. Think about the issues that affect your decision to vote for this candidate. Please respond to the following questions about your voting decisions.

We will present you with a series of political issues. For each one, please respond with how this issue affects your voting decisions using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Does not affect my decisions				Affects my decisions moderately				Will not vote for a candidate who disagrees with me on this issue

1. Abortion
2. Tax relief
3. The war on drugs
4. National security
5. The war on terror
6. Social Security
7. Welfare reform

COMBATIVE POLITICS MEASURE

Now, we would like you to think about your attitudes toward politics in general. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements, using this scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Completely disagree		Disagree somewhat		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree somewhat		Completely agree

1. A politician should never give up something he or she believes as a part of a political compromise
2. The political party opposing participant's affiliation is entirely wrong: they have no positions at all that I agree with
3. When a candidate is elected, this means that he or she has been given a mandate by the voters to push their agenda regardless of what the minority of voters feel
4. In American politics the losing party should have no influence in government
5. Political compromise is never a good idea
6. The political party opposing my affiliation are, overall, less moral people than my affiliation

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Vita

Daniel Conor Seyle, the son of Michael A. and Moira K. Seyle, was born April 14th, 1978 in Houston, Texas. Conor graduated from Texas A&M in May of 2000 with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a minor in Spanish. After graduating from Texas A&M, Conor worked as a Summer Research Assistant and then as a full-time Research Assistant for the Charles F. Kettering Foundation in Dayton, Ohio. Conor left the Kettering Foundation in the summer of 2001, when he enrolled in the Ph.D. program in social psychology at the University of Texas, Austin. At the University of Texas, Conor conducted research in the self-concept and political groups and taught two semesters of Introductory Social Psychology. Conor is the author or co-author of the articles "A house divided? The psychology of red and blue America" in *American Psychologist*, "Personality psychology's comeback and emerging symbiosis with social psychology" in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, "Finding value in diversity: Verification of personal and social self-views in diverse groups" in *The Academy of Management Review* and "Dot com democracy: Computer-mediated communication, community, and deliberation" in *The Kettering Exchange*. He is also a co-author of the chapters "Being oneself in the workplace: Self-verification and identity in organizational contexts" in C. A. Bartel, S. Blader, & A. Wrzesniewski (Eds.) *Identity and the Modern Organization* and "The antecedents of self-esteem" in M. Kernis (Ed.) *Self-esteem Issues and Answers: A Sourcebook of Current Perspectives*. Conor was named a Graduate Fellow of the American Academy of Political and Social Science in 2007.

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