

Moral Obstnacy in Political Negotiations

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Research in behavioral economics finds that moral considerations bear on the offers that people make and accept in negotiations. This finding is relevant for political negotiations, wherein moral concerns are manifold. However, behavioral economics has yet to incorporate a major theme from moral psychology: People differ, sometimes immensely, in which issues they perceive to be a matter of morality. We review research about the measurement and characteristics of moral convictions. We hypothesize that moral conviction leads to uncompromising bargaining strategies and failed negotiations. We test this theory in three incentivized experiments in which participants bargain over political policies with real payoffs at stake. We find that participants' moral convictions are linked with aggressive bargaining strategies, which helps explain why it is harder to forge bargains on some political issues than others. We also find substantial asymmetries between liberals and conservatives in the intensity of their moral convictions about different issues.

KEY WORDS: attitude strength, bargaining, experimental political science, moral conviction, moral psychology, negotiation, ultimatum game

When a faction is formed upon a point of right or principle, there is no occasion where men discover a greater obstnacy. —David Hume (*Of the First Principles of Government*, 1777)

“The key to understanding deal making in Congress,” Representative Barney Frank once joked, “is to remember that the ankle bone is connected to the shoulder bone. Anything can be the basis of a deal” (quoted in Binder & Lee, 2013, pp. 58, 59). Consider that legislators secured enough votes for the Tax Reform Act of 1986 by tucking in tax breaks for a stadium in Cleveland, a convention center in Miami, and a parking garage in Memphis (Birnbaum & Murray, 1988). Or consider that the North American Free Trade Agreement passed with the help of favors for producers of sugar cane, tomatoes, and winter vegetables in Florida (Evans, 2004).

In political negotiations, different policies are often fungible: Losses in one policy area can be offset by gains in another. This is a feature of many prominent models of legislative bargaining. In one model, legislators bargain over how to divide an undifferentiated pot of rewards among

their districts (Baron & Ferejohn, 1989). In others, actors have preferences over multiple policy dimensions which they can substitute and trade off (e.g., Shepsle & Weingast, 1987; Tsebelis, 2002).

While often appropriate, the presumption of fungibility differs from the way people, at least sometimes, talk about politics. In some cases, people claim that *no* gains whatsoever could make concessions acceptable. When the Obama Administration proposed to change how the Social Security Administration calculates inflation, 30 House Democrats promised to vote against “any and every cut to Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security benefits” (Jan & Bender, 2013). New Jersey Governor Chris Christie said about his opposition to same-sex marriage, “I would not compromise my principles for politics... It’s my belief. It’s my core belief” (Kurtz, 2012). Some of these strong claims could be posturing, but they often seem sincere. Should we doubt the resolve of legislators like Congressman Phil Roe who said, “I am committed to protecting the Second Amendment and will fight any attempts to weaken that fundamental right” (“Second Amendment,” 2018)?

We explore whether obstinacy in political negotiations arises, in part, from moral psychology. Moral considerations shape how people bargain and compromise (e.g., Levitt & List, 2007). We suggest this is especially important in *political* negotiations. Political negotiations routinely concern policies with moral significance—rights, obligations, prohibitions, religious values, and public threats such as terrorism or disease. As we will see, moral disagreements interfere with compromise, which may make political bargaining especially difficult.

Importantly, moral psychology also shows that whether an issue is a moral issue is often in the eye of the beholder (Haidt, 2012; Shweder, 2012). We use methods from psychology to assess whether people view various political policies as moral issues. We then assess whether strong moral convictions predict tougher political bargaining using experimental economic games, which allows us to examine the strategic implications of moral judgment for political bargaining with real incentives at stake (on the use of economic games in political science, see Morton & Williams, 2010; Wilson, 2011). If moral convictions predict tougher bargaining, then moral psychology can help explain why political compromise is often elusive. Of course, another common cause of negotiation failure is polarized partisanship (Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, 2012; Mason, 2018). Whereas partisanship is a trait that varies *between* people, moral concerns also vary *within* a person. Hence, we focus on moral judgment as a less studied factor that could impede political negotiations.

Moral Psychology in Bargaining

In many economic models, rational agents act to maximize their earnings. But people in games and real life also care about generosity, reciprocity, punishment, fairness, precedents from previous deals, conventions, principles, others’ approval, obeying the law, and more (Camerer & Fehr, 2004; Levitt & List, 2007; Schelling, 1960). People often share money with anonymous others (in the dictator game; Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1986), reciprocate by returning money to anonymous others who previously trusted them (in the trust game; Berg, Dickhaut, & McCabe, 1995), or reject negotiated offers they deem unfair (in the ultimatum game; Güth, Schmittberger, & Schwarze, 1982). These and related studies do not always refer to “morality” explicitly, but they essentially deal with moral concepts (cf. Levitt & List, 2007).

In one respect, these economic experiments resonate with research in moral psychology. Just as people will sacrifice earnings for moral reasons, they also hold moral stances that can be resistant to cost-benefit considerations. Thus, people are often unwilling to trade off or compromise moral values (e.g., Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000). Psychologists argue that people see moral rules as similar to Kant’s categorical imperatives—strict prohibitions that one should abide by with little attention to the consequences (cf. Greene, 2007). Moreover, evolutionary psychologists have

argued that humans evolved the cognitive ability to learn, innovate, and enforce moral prohibitions in order to manage conflicts between coalitions in small-scale societies (DeScioli & Kurzban, 2009, 2013; Tooby & Cosmides, 2010).

However, previous research on experimental games has focused on moral concepts such as sharing, honesty, and reciprocity which are widely agreed upon across individuals and cultures. But morality is also notoriously particular—people disagree about what is right and wrong and which issues are moral issues at all. Contentious morals include rules about sexual behavior, authority, supernatural beliefs, charging interest on loans, and so on; these differences occur across cultures, across time, and across individuals within a culture (Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993, 2012; Rozin, 1999; Shweder, 2012). In the United States, some people view smoking as morally wrong, and some don't (Rozin, 1999). In some societies, people are outraged when a man eats in the same room as a woman, dances, or owns a dog—innocuous actions elsewhere (Shweder, 2012).

Political actors commonly point to moral sticking points—points on which they will not compromise even for immense gains. In some cases, this can be traced to obvious moral or religious issues, such as President George W. Bush's rigid stance on stem cell research. But moral commitments also apply to policies that may seem purely economic. Most Republican members of congress signed the Taxpayer Protection Pledge, vowing to vote against any tax increase whatsoever; similarly, Democrats vowed to vote against any decrease to Social Security benefits. These commitments also draw on people's sense of morality, blurring the distinction between moral and economic issues (see also Ryan, 2014).

Measuring Morality

In sum, we hypothesize that moral commitments interfere with political bargaining. To examine person- and issue-specific moral concerns, we use measures of *moral conviction* (Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005). Moral conviction is the degree to which a person's judgment is based on their sense of morality. Is your judgment about an issue, such as minimum wage or the death penalty, “a reflection of your core moral beliefs and convictions?” Is it “connected to your beliefs about fundamental right and wrong?”

These moral-conviction items provide a bottom-up approach to morality. Other approaches define top-down principles that shape people's specific moral views, for instance perceptions of harm (Schein & Gray, 2015; Turiel, 1998), moral metaphors (Lakoff, 1996), values (Rokeach, 1973), or foundations (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009). In contrast, the moral conviction approach treats moral considerations as a matter of measurement. Participants are free to organize their moral values around central themes, or they can hold moral views about specific topics in isolation. This idea resonates with public opinion research arguing that people's attitudes are fragmented or “morselized” (Kinder & Kalmoe, 2017, pp. 125, 126).

Moral conviction is one dimension among several that characterize attitudes (Krosnick, Boninger, Chuang, Berent, & Carnot, 1993; Miller & Peterson, 2004; Petty & Krosnick, 1995; Visser, Bizer, & Krosnick, 2006). It is distinct from other attitude facets, such as caring about an issue or having a stake in it. Moral conviction changes the qualitative character of attitudes, rather than only contributing to a single dimension of support or opposition (Ryan, 2017). Opinions that are equally intense in other ways still vary substantially in moral conviction, particularly political issues (Bauman & Skitka, 2009; Skitka et al., 2005). Also, even controlling for other attitude facets, moral conviction is associated with intolerance for differences, with believing one's preference is objective and universal, and with endorsement of political violence (Tagar, Morgan, Halperin, & Skitka, 2014; Wright, Cullum, & Schwab, 2008; see review in Skitka, Washburn, & Carsel, 2015).

Overview of Research

The studies. We use economic games to study political bargaining. Bargaining in economic games is well-studied, providing a strong basis for comparison when political content is introduced into the game. In our games, participants make decisions with real money at stake, and their payoffs depend on how they negotiate with a political opponent. Past research on morality and political intransigence asked people to make decisions in isolation (Ryan, 2017, Study 3); though a useful first step, this prior research cannot answer an important question: How will moral concerns affect political bargaining when the decisions of a strategic opponent must be considered?

In our studies, participants make decisions in six different negotiations. Monetary incentives are held constant across the negotiations, but we layer a different (fictional) context on each interaction. We ask participants to imagine that they are legislators bargaining with political opponents over different policies. We examine how their strategies and outcomes depend on the issue framing the negotiation. Because moral conviction is associated with strong commitments and an unwillingness to make trade-offs, we predict that moral conviction about an issue motivates tougher bargaining. In our games, the issue frames are fictional, but the money is real and constant. Thus, any differences in bargaining can be attributed to the frames. This creates a clear test of the hypothesis that moral conviction predicts tougher bargaining. Finally, we emphasize a key feature: Participants are always better off monetarily by reaching any deal, no matter how lopsided, than if they fail to agree. Compromise pays, but can people with strong moral convictions reach a deal?

Understanding the psychology of political bargaining. Although participants imagine themselves as legislators, we do not intend to directly extrapolate to the behavior of elites in real legislative bargaining. We use a legislative bargaining game as a model system that recreates—as much as possible in a stylized experimental game—some of the challenges of political bargaining. Our approach is best understood in relation to the experimental literature on bargaining, which has not previously incorporated political issues. We seek to understand, in a relatively abstract way, how people make trade-offs between material benefits and moral convictions in a political context.

Within-person versus between-person effects. Each participant plays six versions of the same bargaining game, each framed with a different political issue. Our studies are thus designed to highlight *within-person* variance, especially whether greater moral conviction about a political issue predicts less willingness to compromise on that issue. Of course, factors that vary between-persons—partisan strength, a competitive mindset, intolerance of disagreement, and so on—also affect political compromise (e.g., Mason, 2018), but the present experiments focus on an additional source of variance that occurs within a person based on their moral convictions about specific issues.

STUDY 1

The Political Ultimatum Game

Study 1 examines how moral conviction relates to behavior in a political ultimatum game. The ultimatum game is a standard tool in behavioral economics for studying how people bargain (Güth et al., 1982). One player proposes how to split a fixed sum of money; a second player chooses whether to accept or reject the split. If accepted, both players earn the amounts specified in the proposal; if rejected, both earn nothing. The ultimatum game represents the final stage of bargaining in which one person proposes a final offer as an ultimatum, and the other person must decide to take it or leave it. Proposers generally offer close to half of the money, and receivers regularly reject smaller amounts (Camerer, 2003); the exact pattern can be affected by framings, how the money is earned, outside offers, and so forth (Camerer, 2003; Levitt & List, 2007). Importantly, the ultimatum game captures strategic relationships that regularly arise in politics. When a legislative committee presents

the full chamber with a bill that is not subject to amendment, or when a union publicly vows to go on strike if its final offer is not accepted, they are playing a kind of ultimatum game.

Method

Participants. We recruited 204 participants via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) in November 2015; see the online supporting information for sample characteristics. Direct comparisons between MTurk and other samples have found similar patterns of behavior, including in games (Buhrmeister, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Horton, Rand, & Zeckhauser, 2011; Mullinix, Leeper, Druckman, & Freese, 2015). Two recent studies using games to study political questions find similar behavior whether played by MTurk workers for \$1 stakes or students in the lab for \$20 stakes (Andrews, Delton, & Kline, 2018; Del Ponte, Delton, Kline, & Seltzer, 2017). (Note that we also examine a national sample in Study 3 below.) Participants signed up for a study on "topics in the news." They earned \$1.50 for completing the experiment and could earn up to an additional \$1 from the bargaining game.

Attitude measures. Participants first reported their opinions about six political issues, which were presented in a unique random order for each participant. The issues were: public-sector collective bargaining, progressive taxation, minimum wage, subsidies for low emission vehicles, stem cell research, and road tolls. To elicit variation in moral conviction, we aimed to include some issues that liberals are likely to moralize and some that conservatives are likely to moralize. We included road tolls as an issue that seemed likely to be less moralized by both liberals and conservatives.

For each issue, participants read a brief description of a policy and reported how much they favored or opposed it. All question wording appears in full in the online supporting information. For instance, the minimum-wage prompt read:

As you may know, there is a federal minimum wage of \$7.25, but each state can make its own minimum wage higher if it wants to. Some people favor having a higher minimum wage, while others do not. How about you? Do you favor having the minimum wage in your state be higher than \$7.25, or do you oppose it?

Participants answered on a 7-point scale (*strongly favor, somewhat favor, slightly favor, neither favor nor oppose, slightly oppose, somewhat oppose, strongly oppose*). We later paired each respondent with another participant who disagreed with them on the issue. Participants who chose "neither favor nor oppose" were then asked to make a forced choice. For each issue, we folded and rescaled participants responses to generate a standard measure of attitude *extremity* that runs from 0 (a neutral opinion) to 1 (*strongly favor* or *strongly oppose the policy*).

Participants answered four additional attitude items. They reported their *moral conviction* (Skitka et al., 2005), answering whether issue position is "a reflection of your core moral beliefs and convictions" and "connected to your beliefs about fundamental right and wrong" (*not at all, slightly, moderately, much, very much*). They also reported personal *importance* and personal *relevance* (cf. Petty & Krosnick, 1995). Participants answered, "How important is this issue to you personally?" (*not important at all, not too important, somewhat important, very important, extremely important*), and "How much does the outcome of this issue directly affect you?" (*not at all, slightly, moderately, much, very much*). For analysis, all attitude measures were scaled 0 to 1.

In the online supporting information, we show that the four attitude measures—extremity, moral conviction, importance, and relevance—are distinct, but also positively intercorrelated (median $r = 0.53$). We also show in the supporting information that moral conviction is not simply a person-level trait. Moral conviction for one issue only moderately correlates with moral conviction for other issues (median $r = 0.36$).

Political bargaining interactions. Next, participants made decisions in a political ultimatum game. We asked participants to “imagine you are a state legislator who is bargaining over the policies in Part 1.” Each participant was randomly assigned to be either a *proposer* or a *receiver*, and they remained consistently in this role across for six negotiations over different political issues, presented in a unique randomized order. Although measuring attitudes before bargaining could potentially lead to demand effects, we think this is unlikely. Other work shows that even with a delay of several weeks between measures of attitude intensity and judgment tasks, the predictive power of attitude intensity measures is not affected (Ryan, 2017, Study 4). In our studies, it is not clear why the moral conviction measure would be advantaged by the ordering more than other measures.

For each issue, they were paired with another participant who disagreed with them on the issue (e.g., participants who favored an increased minimum wage were paired with opponents who did not favor increasing it). Participants read that at the end of the study we would randomly select one negotiation to determine their cash payment. The instructions emphasized that each of the six negotiations would be with a different opponent. None of our studies used deception, and participants were paid as described.

For each issue, the proposer chose to offer from zero to five “policy points” to a receiver. We described the payoffs as policy points to fit the political theme, where stakes often include nonmonetary rewards such as public services or electoral popularity. However, participants knew that each policy point was worth 20¢ in bonus payment. Hence, they were bargaining over a dollar in every case, while we varied the fictional content of each negotiation. We designed the choices such that an even split is not possible to reflect that even splits are not generally available in politics.

The proposer simply chose how much to offer. The receiver saw a list of all possible offers and chose which offers they would accept. This “strategy method” (e.g., Bahry & Wilson, 2006) allows us to observe receivers’ reactions to all possible offers. If the receiver accepted the offer that was actually made by the proposer, then the deal was successful, and participants were awarded policy points and associated bonus earnings (if that issue was selected for payment). If the receiver did not accept the proposer’s offer, the negotiations would fail and neither earned a bonus.

We had different numbers of issue-liberals and issue-conservatives so we used some players’ decisions in multiple interactions in order to match each proposer with a receiver. Before making their decisions, participants answered two comprehension questions; most answered correctly the first time (97% for the first item and 83% for the second), and the remaining participants received additional training on the points they misunderstood.

Figure 1 shows the negotiation screen for a receiver who favored increases in minimum wage. Participants saw the possible deals that could be made on the policy. Each possible deal was associated with different divisions of the five policy points. Importantly, these payoffs were held constant across the six political negotiations.

The dependent measure is a player’s *generosity*—the proportion of the stake a player would allow her opponent to keep, which we assess separately for each issue. For proposers, generosity is the proportion (0–1) offered to the receiver. For receivers, generosity is the maximum proportion for the proposer that the receiver would accept (potentially among multiple acceptable offers). Hence, for both proposers and receivers a generosity score of 0 means they would not allow the other person to have any points, and a score of 1 means they would allow the other person to have all the points.

Game-theoretic analysis. As in any ultimatum game, if players are rational and money maximizing, then the (known to be fictional) political description of the game should be irrelevant. Receivers should accept all nonzero proposals, so proposers should offer one policy point, yielding earnings of 80¢ for the proposer and 20¢ for the receiver. Of course, past work finds that in reality people tend toward even splits (Camerer, 2003). Typically, receivers reject very unequal offers and, anticipating this, proposers offer close to half the stake. However, because the payoffs are constant across issues, these considerations likewise are constant across issues.

Statistical approach. We conduct two main analyses. In one, we look for pure experimental effects by testing whether participants' bargaining decisions differ across the political issue frames, using within-subject analysis of variance (ANOVA). The other analysis examines how moral conviction and other attitude facets predict bargaining. For this, we estimate models with crossed random effects—a multilevel approach that accounts for similarity within groups (issues and participants), neither of which is nested in the other (Baayen, Davidson, & Bates, 2008). This model assumes that person- and issue-level intercepts are uncorrelated with regressors (the attitude-strength dimensions). In the online supporting information, we report models where subjects and issues are entered as fixed effects, which is substantially less efficient and discards information from between-group

The Ultimatum Game (Study 1)

As you recall, the federal minimum wage is \$7.25, but states can make their own minimum wage higher if they want. Some people favor a higher minimum wage, while others oppose it.

This year, there is a proposal to change your state's minimum wage law. The minimum wage can be as high as \$15.00 per hour, which would be the highest in the country. And it can be as low as \$7.25, the federal minimum. But if no agreement is reached, the budget won't pass. The table below shows the policies that are under consideration.

Minimum wage	Policy points for legislator FAVORING a higher minimum wage	Policy points for legislator OPPOSING a higher minimum wage
Policy 1: \$7.25 / hour	0	5
Policy 2: \$8.75 / hour	1	4
Policy 3: \$10.25 / hour	2	3
Policy 4: \$12.00 / hour	3	2
Policy 5: \$13.50 / hour	4	1
Policy 6: \$15.00 / hour	5	0

You said you FAVOR a higher minimum wage. The other legislator in this negotiation OPPOSES a higher minimum wage.

Which of these policies would you be willing to accept? (Please select ALL the policies you would be willing to accept. You CAN select more than 1 if you choose.)

If one of your selections matches the policy the other legislator proposed, then you will both get the policy points from that policy.

If the other legislator's proposal is not one of your selections, then you both get 0 points.

Figure 1. Example negotiation task for Study 1.

variance, but rules out person- and issue-varying characteristics as potential confounding factors. The same pattern of results emerges.

Results

Our main measure is players' generosity: the highest proportion of the stake a player would allow their partner to have. Pooling across issues, receivers are more generous than proposers: Receivers allow proposers to keep 57% of stake ($SE = 0.01$); proposers only offered 42% ($SE = 0.01$; for the difference, $p < .01$). This is consistent with the stronger bargaining position of proposers. However, as shown in the supporting information, participants' generosity varies across issues.

We next examine whether bargaining varies by issue, despite all issues having the same underlying payoffs. As predicted, bargaining depends on the issue (Figure 2; based on a within-subject ANOVA: $F(5, 203) = 4.75$, $p < .01$). This is also true looking at the roles separately (receivers, $F(5, 101) = 4.36$, $p < .01$; proposers, $F(5, 101) = 1.84$, $p = .10$). For instance, proposers offered 46% of the stake for collective bargaining but only 38% for the stem-cell issue. For the receivers, the same comparison is 64% versus 56%. This is a pure experimental effect showing that the political content affected participants bargaining decisions.

We next ask whether participants with stronger moral convictions drive a harder bargain. In Table 1, we estimate three specifications: the bivariate relationship between moral conviction and generosity; a specification adding attitude importance and relevance; and one adding extremity. Each specification has advantages. The first estimates the effect of moral conviction without covariates and without requiring assumptions about how moral conviction relates to the other measures (Lenz & Sahn, 2017). The second specification tests whether moral conviction has effects over importance and relevance—two attitude measures with a long history in the literature. The third introduces attitude extremity, which we consider separately because of its special standing as a potential omnibus measure of attitude intensity (see Visser et al., 2006, pp. 55, 56). Whereas moral conviction,

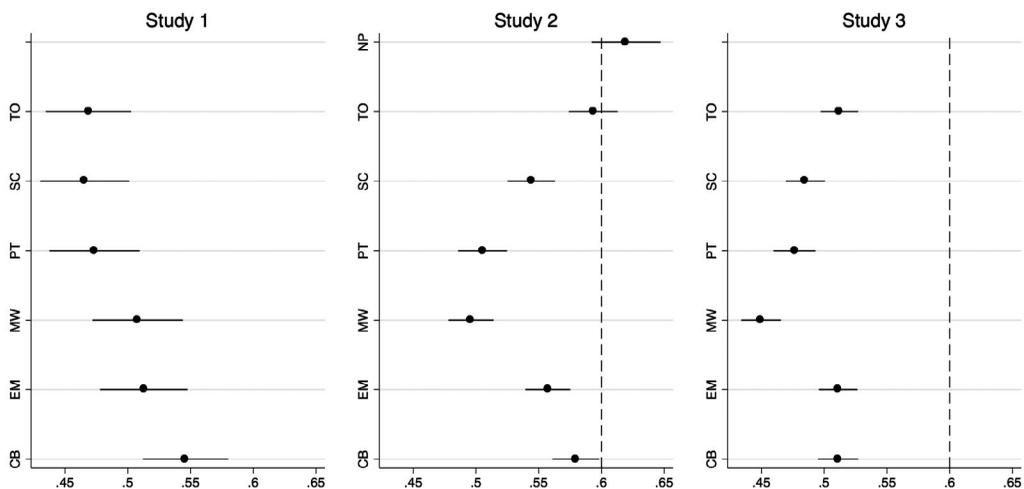


Figure 2. Average generosity, by issue. The figure shows the average level of generosity as a proportion, depending on which issue is focal in the bargaining interaction. CB = Collective Bargaining; EM = Emissions; MW = Minimum Wage; PT = Progressive Taxation; SC = Stem Cells; TO = Tolls; NP = Nonpolitical (Study 2 only). As described in the text, the generosity variable is the proportion of the stake a player is willing to provide to his or her opponent. Darkened lines represent 95% confidence intervals. The dash line in Studies 2 and 3 represents the least generous offer players need to make to strike a bargain, if they assume their opponent will make the same offer.

Table 1. Predictors of Generosity in Bargaining

	Study 1			Study 2			Study 3		
Moral Conviction	-0.158** (0.024)	-0.118** (0.030)	-0.074* (0.031)	-0.082** (0.012)	-0.059** (0.015)	-0.038* (0.015)	-0.065** (0.010)	-0.040** (0.012)	-0.024† (0.012)
Importance		-0.075 (0.038)	-0.035 (0.039)		-0.051 (0.018)	-0.019 (0.019)		-0.077** (0.016)	-0.041* (0.017)
Relevance		0.006 (0.030)	0.005 (0.029)		0.013 (0.015)	0.010 (0.015)		0.024 (0.013)	0.023 (0.013)
Extremity			-0.111** (0.025)			-0.064** (0.012)			-0.076** (0.010)
σ_{issue}	0.032	0.031	0.031	0.025	0.023	0.021	0.018	0.016	0.012
ICC _{issue}	0.016	0.015	0.015	0.023	0.020	0.016	0.012	0.009	0.006
$\sigma_{\text{participant}}$	0.150	0.151	0.151	0.107	0.107	0.106	0.093	0.093	0.094
ICC _{participant}	0.346	0.353	0.355	0.408	0.411	0.415	0.322	0.326	0.337
σ_{residual}	0.204	0.203	0.202	0.126	0.126	0.125	0.134	0.133	0.131
Marginal R ²	0.367	0.377	0.382	0.454	0.456	0.465	0.344	0.351	0.370
Observations	1,224	1,224	1,224	1,824	1,824	1,824	2,484	2,484	2,484
Participants	204	204	204	304	304	304	414	414	414

Note. Crossed random effects models. Standard errors in parentheses. All independent measures are scaled from 0 to 1. The dependent variable is the proportion of benefits allocated to the bargaining opponent and ranges from 0 to 1 in Study 1 and (given the different structure of the compromise game) from 0 to 0.8 in Studies 2 and 3. ICC statistics are intraclass correlation coefficients. The online supporting information reports models with respondent and issue fixed effects. Marginal R² represents the proportion of variance explained by fixed effects (the attitude intensity measures and an intercept).
 †*p* = .057, **p* < 0.05, ***p* < 0.01 (two-tailed).

importance, and relevance all tap relatively specific aspects of attitudes, extremity is a more global measure that might, in part, be determined by the more specific aspects of an attitude.

As shown in Table 1, people with stronger moral convictions drive harder bargains. In the most conservative specification, people with the strongest moral convictions offer 7.4 percentage points less of the stake than people with the weakest moral convictions.¹ Although 7.4 points might seem relatively small, remember that less generous offers put the whole stake at risk. Offering a few percentage points less means a greater chance of losing 100% of the rewards. Since players' offers are generally around half (40% or 60%), 7.4 percentage points is a relatively large portion (37%) of this typical range spanning the midpoint.

Attitude extremity also predicts bargaining, such that compared to the least extreme people, the most extreme offer 11 percentage points less; when directly compared to moral conviction, the two coefficients are not statistically distinguishable ($p = .68$; see Table S9 in the online supporting information). Thus, it seems that these two facets of attitudes independently contribute to tough bargaining—and in comparable degree. In contrast, associations with importance and relevance are smaller and not significant. Also, we compared the marginal R-squared to the intraclass correlation coefficient for participants, finding that the attitude intensity measures account for approximately the same amount of variance as factors that vary between participants.

In sum, we have two primary results. First, as predicted, greater moral conviction is associated with tougher bargaining, whereas importance and relevance were not. Thus, participants' moral concerns predicted how they bargained with real payoffs at stake—even though the political frames were known to be fictional. Second, we find differences in bargaining behavior as a function of the political issue. This is noteworthy because, whereas the association between moral conviction and bargaining is correlational, this finding is a pure experimental effect.

STUDIES 2 AND 3

The Political Compromise Game

In the ultimatum game, a proposer makes a final take-it-or-leave-it offer. This setup mimics real moments in politics. But it is asymmetric: Proposers have the upper hand and regularly earn higher payouts than receivers. Other political negotiations are more symmetric such as committees where members can make proposals and counterproposals. Studies 2 and 3 examine bargaining when the two negotiators stand on equal footing. Although less well-known than the ultimatum game, behavioral economists have studied people's decisions in symmetric bargaining games (reviewed in Camerer, 2003). In one version, both negotiators propose a deal, and if the two proposals are compatible, then the deal is successful; otherwise it fails. Following this, we designed a political-compromise game in which participants negotiate over political policies in symmetric roles.

Further, in Study 3 we extend our observations to a national sample. Studies 1 and 2 use convenience samples recruited from MTurk. Convenience samples are appropriate for our goal to test hypotheses about moral conviction and bargaining, rather than to estimate parameters for a larger population. Nonetheless, a national sample allows us to study bargaining in the current American electorate. For example, a national sample will reveal the distribution of moral conviction for each issue. It also allows us to address a possible concern that participants may expect different choices from an opponent coming from Mturk compared to the general population.

¹In all three studies (see the online supporting information and Figure 4), a minimum 30% of participants had either the lowest or highest moral conviction score. Thus, interpreting the effect of moral conviction throughout its entire range is reasonable. In each study, the standard deviation of moral conviction is about .33; to see the effect of moral conviction from $-1SD$ to $+1SD$ multiply the regression weight by $2/3$.

Method

Participants. For Study 2, we recruited a convenience sample of 304 U.S. participants from MTurk who completed six rounds of the political compromise game. We also recruited a separate sample of 102 participants to complete a purely economic version of the compromise game for comparison; this game had the same payoff structure but was described in economic terms rather than with political content. Data for Study 2 were collected in September and October of 2016.

For Study 3, we recruited a national sample of 414 Americans using Qualtrics Research Services (QRS). QRS recruits participants to its online panel on the basis of demographic characteristics. Quota sampling was used with U.S. Census benchmarks for sex, race/ethnicity, and household income. As we report in the online supporting information, our sample matches Census benchmarks well on these dimensions. Because this data source is more expensive and might exhibit lower attention to instructions, we used additional comprehension procedures in addition to QRS's standard quality-control standards; see the online supporting information for more detail. Data were collected in September and October of 2017.

Attitude measures. Participants responded to the same six political issues as in Study 1 (full text in the online supporting information). In Study 3, we saved time by only using the item asking whether an issue opinion is connected to beliefs about fundamental right and wrong. (Previous studies found that the two moral conviction questions are correlated highly enough—above $r = .80$ —that one can suffice.)

Similar to Study 1, correlations among the attitude dimensions are moderate, and moral conviction was only moderately correlated across issues (see the online supporting information). Although the studies were conducted over two years, the rank ordering of issues by moral conviction is nearly identical in all.

Bargaining interactions. For each issue, participants bargained with a different opponent who disagreed with them. They would be paid for one interaction, determined randomly after the experiment. The political-compromise game differed from the ultimatum game in two ways. First, the negotiators had symmetric roles. Both players chose which policies they would accept. Each policy was a division of 10 policy points (1 point = .10 cents). The possible divisions were (self, other): (8, 2), (6, 4), (4, 6), or (2, 8). It was not possible to demand the entire stake. If the players agreed on one or more policy, then the deal succeeds and they earn the average payoffs of the agreed-to policies. If no policies are mutually accepted, then the deal fails and both players earn nothing. A player who rejects all four policies guarantees that the deal fails (Figure 3). Second, compared to Study 1, we used more general descriptions of each policy. For example, in the negotiation over minimum wage, the possible policies were “greatly increase,” “somewhat increase,” “somewhat decrease,” or “greatly decrease” the minimum wage (Figure 3). This focuses the measure on participants' overall generosity in bargaining, while minimizing noise from their views on particular policy details.

We also collected an MTurk sample that completed a purely economic version of the compromise game with no political content. These participants completed a single round of the compromise game with no prior-attitude measures. Participants simply bargained over how to divide a dollar with an opponent by choosing the set of divisions they would accept (see instructions in the online supporting information).

The main dependent measure is a participant's generosity for each negotiation. We measure generosity as the maximum proportion of the stake that a player allows her partner to have in the policies she accepted. Thus, a player whose most generous accepted split is (2 self, 8 other) has a generosity score of .8. If a player rejected all possible offers, the generosity score is 0. (This is unlike the ultimatum game, where zero means a demand for all of the stake; in the compromise game, zero means guaranteeing a failed deal with zero payoffs for both players.)

The Compromise Game (Studies 2 and 3)

As you recall, the federal minimum wage is \$7.25, but states can make their own minimum wage higher if they want. Some people favor a higher minimum wage, while others oppose it.

You will negotiate whether to increase or decrease your state's minimum wage. If you reach an agreement, the legislation will pass and both legislators gain policy points for their success. If no agreement is reached, then no legislation is passed and the legislators gain nothing.

You said you FAVOR increasing the minimum wage. The other legislator in this negotiation OPPOSES increasing the minimum wage.

The table below shows the policies that are under consideration. Which policies would you be willing to accept? Check off all of the policies you are willing to accept.

Remember, if you both accept a policy, they you gain the policy points listed for that policy.

Policy	YOU	OTHER
Greatly Increase Minimum Wage	8	2
Somewhat Increase Minimum Wage	6	4
Somewhat Decrease Minimum Wage	4	6
Greatly Decrease Minimum Wage	2	8

Figure 3. Example negotiation task for Studies 2 and 3.

Game-theoretic analysis. As shown in the online supporting information, all cases where players agree on just one division are asymmetric pure strategy equilibria; since people generally bargain for about half, the most relevant are 4/6 and 6/4. Although it is not an equilibrium, the case where both players offer 4/6 (offering 60% to the opponent) merits attention as a natural choice for mutual cooperation. This is the least generous strategy that, if played symmetrically, consistently leads to a successful deal: An agreement is reached, and both players earn half the stake.

Results

Do players bargain differently when politics is involved? Participants' generosity is defined as the proportion of the stake offered in the most generous division they accepted (e.g., it is .8 for a player whose most generous offer is to allow her opponent to keep 8 points out of 10). The middle and right panels of Figure 2 report mean generosity scores. Although the payoffs are always the same, participants are less generous on some issues than others, bargaining harder depending on the political content.

For the purely economic (nonpolitical) negotiation in Study 2, participants were relatively generous. Most participants (84%) accepted at least one split favoring their opponent (i.e., allowing them to have 60% or 80% of the stake). The average offer was 62%. This is close to 60% which is the minimum symmetric offer that allows a successful deal (shown as the reference line in Figure 2). Thus, when the compromise game is purely economic, participants are generous and likely to strike a deal.

When politics is introduced, bargaining changes. For nearly all the political negotiations in Studies 2 and 3, the average offer is significantly below 60%; see Figure 2 (all $ps < .04$, except the tolls scenario in Study 2). In Study 2, participants made less generous offers for each political issue in comparison to the purely economic negotiation (all $ps < .02$, except the tolls issue). Thus, participants bargained harder over politics—at the risk of negotiation failure. This is direct experimental

evidence that the political content of a negotiation can alter bargaining. And this occurred even though real payoffs were at stake, and the political frames were fictional.

Moreover, in both studies, participants' generosity differed by political issue, which was experimentally varied within-subject (Study 2, $F(5, 303) = 28.74, p < .01$; Study 3, $F(5, 413) = 14.61, p < .01$). For instance, participants made less generous offers in negotiations over minimum wage than collective bargaining (9 percentage points less in Study 2 and 6 percentage points less in Study 3). Although the payoffs were constant, participants negotiated differently by political issue.

Finally, do people with stronger moral conviction drive a harder bargain? Yes, moral conviction predicts tougher bargaining in both studies (Table 1). Going from participants with weakest to strongest moral convictions in the most conservative model specifications, there are decreases in generosity in Study 2 and Study 3, respectively, of 4 and 2 percentage points. Again, although these effects are small as an absolute percentage, recall that less generous offers put 100% of the stake at risk (see below on the frequencies of failed negotiations).

The comparable effects for attitude extremity are 6 and 8 percentage points. As shown in Table S9 in the online supporting information, the difference between coefficients for moral conviction and extremity is not significant in Study 2, though it is in Study 3. In neither study does relevance significantly predict bargaining; importance only significantly predicts bargaining in Study 3.

To summarize, we found two direct experimental effects. First, people bargained differently across the different political issues, even though the payoffs were always identical, and the frames were fictional. Second, compared to a purely economic negotiation, participants in Study 2 were less generous in political negotiations. Using correlational methods, we found that people with stronger moral convictions bargained harder. Finally, we found these patterns of political bargaining both in a convenience sample and in a diverse national sample of Americans.

Negotiation Failure

The results so far focused on the strategies of individual players. Since participants negotiated with each other, we can also examine the likelihood that a *pair* of negotiators—one on the liberal side of an issue and one on the conservative side—will successfully strike a bargain. Table 2 reports the probability of a deal being struck for each issue. We calculated these probabilities by examining the joint distribution of offers by liberals and conservatives on each side of each issue. The probability of a bargain differs noticeably across issues. The range is approximately 30 percentage points in Study 1 and around 15 percentage points in Studies 2 and 3. For instance, in all three studies participants were most likely to reach a deal on public-sector collective bargaining, whereas they often found it most difficult to reach a deal on progressive taxation.

Interestingly, the probability of a deal diverges noticeably from the issue's average generosity (Figure 2). For instance, in Study 2, participants had the lowest average generosity for minimum wage, but they were still more likely to strike a bargain for minimum wage than for progressive taxation or stem cell research. This divergence arises from asymmetries in generosity between the liberal and conservative sides. For minimum wage, participants on the liberal side made low offers ($M = 48%$ of the stake), but participants on the conservative side made relatively generous offers ($M = 60%$) which helped close the deals. This was not because liberals were always stingy; on several issues, liberals were more generous than conservatives (see the online supporting information). These results suggest that people might strategically accommodate their political opponents in negotiations—using generous strategies when they expect opponents to bargain aggressively.

If issue liberals and conservatives differ in their strategies, do they also differ in how much they moralize the issues? Figure 4 shows the distribution of moral conviction by issue and issue-side in our national sample (see the online supporting information for the other studies). All issues are moralized by a substantial proportion of respondents, underscoring that moralization is not an inherent

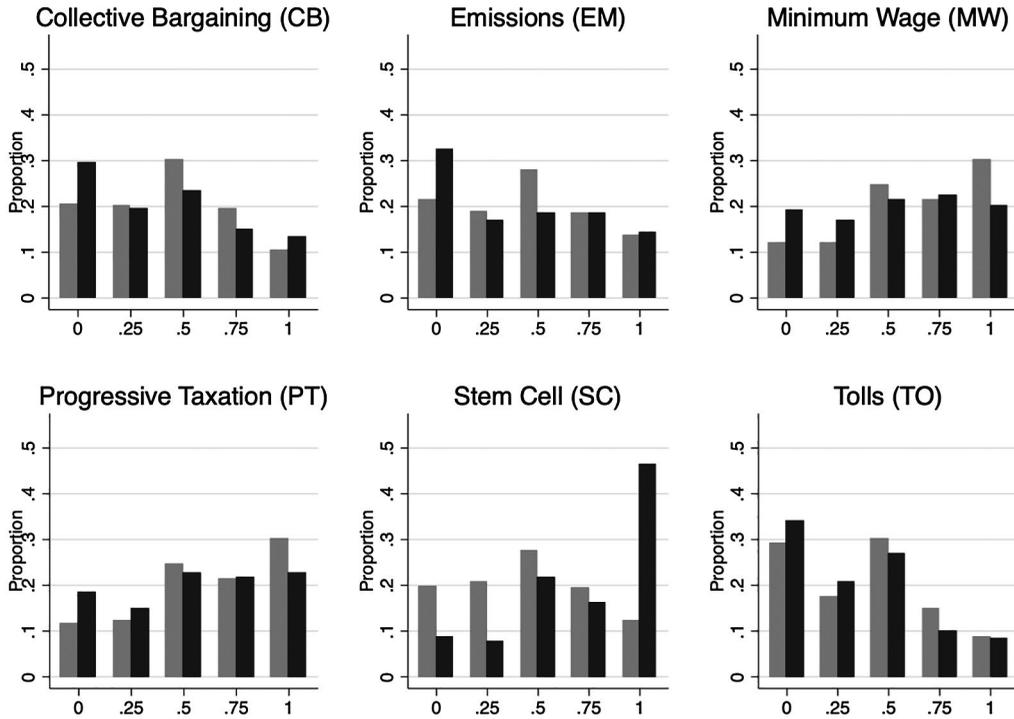


Figure 4. Distribution of moral conviction, by issue and issue side (Study 3). Gray bars represent issue liberals. Black bars represent issue conservatives. Similar figures for Studies 1 and 2 are presented in the online supporting information.

feature of some issues and not others. More to the point, several issues show liberal-conservative asymmetries. For instance, liberals show greater moral conviction about minimum wage than conservatives, and conservatives have greater moral conviction about stem cell research. Thus, whereas people with high moral conviction might bargain aggressively, people with low moral conviction might expect this and be willing to give way to their opponent, to ensure a deal happens at all.

Given these observations, future research might examine how individuals can signal moralization to issue opponents. Previous research suggests that moralization is associated with distinctive rhetorical styles (Clifford & Jerit, 2013; Ryan, 2019). Additionally, it seems plausible that leaders and interest groups could demonstrate a moral basis to their bargaining position via partnerships, policy statements, advertising, and the like. If opponents take this sort of posturing as a credible

Table 2. Probability of a Bargain

	Study 1 (Ultimatum Game)	Study 2 (Compromise Game)	Study 3 (Compromise Game)
Collective Bargaining	0.49	0.88	0.73
Emissions	0.34	0.84	0.73
Minimum Wage	0.25	0.83	0.72
Progressive Taxes	0.18	0.72	0.69
Stem Cells	0.26	0.73	0.60
Tolls	0.35	0.88	0.72
Nonpolitical	–	0.84	–

Note. Cell entries are the probability of a randomly selected liberal and conservative striking a bargain, given the distribution of offers made by liberals and conservatives in our studies.

commitment to stand firm in negotiations, then ostentatious moralization might help secure concessions from political opponents.

Conclusion

In three experiments, we found that participants bargained differently depending on the political issue at stake. Further, participants who had stronger moral convictions (and more extreme attitudes) about a particular issue were more aggressive when bargaining on that issue. Importantly, these differences across political issues occurred even though the underlying monetary payoffs were always identical. Hence, the substantive considerations that come to mind as individuals contemplate political negotiations can lead them to bargain harder and can contribute to failed negotiations.

These results return us to Barney Frank's assertion that anything can be the basis of a political deal. Anything? Perhaps not. Our studies imply a caveat: People are more resistant to compromise on some issues than others. For some people, certain issues may not be negotiable at all. Moreover, these psychological obstacles do not come only from people's intense attitudes and preferences. They can also arise more specifically from people's moral convictions.

Importantly, although we present experimental evidence that political content interferes with bargaining, our analysis of moral conviction is correlational, warranting caution in interpretation. We think the most straightforward interpretation is that moral conviction activates a rule-bound mindset that makes it difficult to offer concessions. But it is possible that the association between moral conviction and compromise is driven by other psychological processes, such as if moral conviction makes people dislike or even despise opponents on a particular issue, and this personal antipathy in turn drives tougher bargaining. Future work can aim to distinguish these and other possibilities.

Across all three studies, both attitude extremity and moral conviction independently and consistently predicted tough bargaining. In contrast, personal relevance did not affect bargaining and importance had inconsistent effects. We suggest that the effect of extremity is to be expected because extremity is a sort of omnibus index of attitude strength (Visser et al., 2006, p. 56). However, we think that the persistent effect of moral conviction merits further attention, since moral conviction is a less studied dimension of political attitudes.

In conclusion, we think that the special challenges posed by political negotiations are more than small framing effects working at the margin of rational choice. Moral considerations are likely to be fundamental to political bargaining because they infuse negotiations with meaning that serves as a basis for commitments and focal points for coordination (Schelling, 1960). Moreover, the ability to trade off one issue against another is key to the legitimacy of a representative government. As Wallach (2018), channeling Madison, writes, "Mutual give and take across the whole range of issues allows accommodation of different groups' most intense preferences, while also allowing the 'losers' in one round of bargaining to keep faith with a larger process they trust will serve them in another round" (p. 21). If moralization damages this important component of pluralism, then it may portend mischief for a government's ability to resolve moral conflicts in peaceful ways.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's web site:

Sample Characteristics

Correlations Among Attitude Intensity Measures

Relationship Between Moral Conviction Measures, by Issue

Distribution of Game Strategies

Average Generosity, by Issue and Issue Side

Liberalism and Conservatism, by Issue

Supporting Result About Correlations Among Attitude Items

Description of Compromise Game Equilibria (Studies 2 and 3)

Distribution of Moral Conviction (Studies 1 and 2)

Fixed Effects Models

Comparing Coefficients

Instrumentation for Study 1

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Instrumentation for Economic-Frame Comparison Study

Instrumentation for Study 3

Qualtrics Research Service Quality-Control Measures