

# Emotions as Moral Amplifiers: An Appraisal Tendency Approach to the Influences of Distinct Emotions upon Moral Judgment

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## Abstract

In this article, we advance the perspective that distinct emotions amplify different moral judgments, based on the emotion's core appraisals. This theorizing yields four insights into the way emotions shape moral judgment. We submit that there are two kinds of specificity in the impact of emotion upon moral judgment: domain specificity and emotion specificity. We further contend that the unique embodied aspects of an emotion, such as nonverbal expressions and physiological responses, contribute to an emotion's impact on moral judgment. Finally, emotions play a key role in determining which issues acquire moral significance in a society over time, in a process known as moralization (Rozin, 1999). The implications of these four observations for future research on emotion and morality are discussed.

## Keywords

embodiment, emotion, moral judgment, moralization

Emotions are inherently subjective. They arise as the result of personal appraisals, and disrupt seemingly more orderly, deliberate forms of judgment and reasoning. From this perspective, emotions would seem to be inappropriate guides to decisions about moral conduct and virtuous character.

Recent scientific endeavors converge on a different view. Emotions, by way of swift and salient intuitions, often provide systematic input into complex moral judgments (Greene & Haidt, 2002; Haidt, 2001). Research increasingly suggests that moral “gut feelings” influence decisions about whether to help others in need (Batson & Shaw, 1991), how severely to punish antisocial behavior (Graham, Weiner, & Zucker, 1997), and how to distribute tasks or resources (Batson, Klein, Highberger, & Shaw, 1995).

In this article, we pursue several insights into this flourishing intuitionist perspective. Our central aim is to advance theory on

the way distinct emotions, with their unique cognitive and somatic components, promote specific kinds of moral judgments. The first two insights—*domain specificity* and *emotion specificity effects*—characterize how distinct emotions, like disgust and compassion, shape moral judgments by prioritizing different sociomoral concerns. With the experience of distinct emotions, we suggest, come different notions about the kinds of actions that are right or wrong, and how individuals ought to relate to one another, which then figure prominently in moral judgments. A third insight, on *embodiment effects*, describes how the embodied components of emotion, such as nonverbal displays and physiological reactions, contribute to moral judgments. Finally, we consider implications of emotion–morality relationships for *moralization*, or large-scale shifts in societal values over time. Across these realms, we review the empirical evidence and highlight critical avenues for future inquiry.

## Emotions Prioritize Specific Sociomoral Concerns

Our underlying assertion that distinct emotions amplify the importance of different sociomoral concerns is rooted in social functional frameworks of emotion (Frijda & Mesquita, 1994; Keltner & Haidt, 1999). In these frameworks, emotions are conceptualized as brief, multicomponent reactions that evolved to help humans navigate the evolutionarily significant threats and opportunities of social living—for example, to resolve dilemmas about when to provide care, cooperate, procreate, or compete. Peripheral and neuroendocrine physiological reactions, as components of emotion, enable behaviors responsive to social threats and opportunities, such as the way heart rate acceleration during anger supports the demands of defending and fighting. The expressive components of emotions, like non-verbal displays or vocal tone, are central to communication and the coordination of social interaction (Keltner & Kring, 1998). Children, for instance, learn to select appropriate behaviors—such as whether to cross an ambiguously dangerous “visual cliff”—largely from observing their caregiver’s emotional displays (Sorce, Emde, Campos, & Klinert, 1985).

Finally, different emotions are associated with unique patterns of cognition. Cognitive appraisals, or the way people interpret and make meaning out of their environments, trigger and persist throughout the experience of an emotion (e.g., Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003). These emotion-related appraisal tendencies, in turn, define how specific emotions color subsequent social judgments by prioritizing specific concerns semantically related to the emotion’s appraisals (Han, Lerner, & Keltner, 2007; Keltner, Horberg, & Oveis, 2006). Fear, for instance, is triggered and partly characterized by appraisals that events are uncertain and outside of one’s control. As a result, when an individual feels fear, subsequent relevant judgments reflect increased concerns about uncertainty and reduced control, even when the object of judgment (e.g., estimates of future events) is unrelated to the original cause of the fear (e.g., a horror film). In studies investigating this phenomenon, participants induced to experience fear in one situation were later found to prefer risk-averse options unrelated to the events that elicited the fear (Lerner & Keltner, 2001). On the other hand, individuals who had been made to experience anger preferred risk-seeking options, consistent with anger’s constituent appraisals of high certainty and high control. Similar appraisal tendency effects have helped clarify the role of distinct emotions in diverse social judgments, including causal attributions (Keltner, Ellsworth, & Edwards, 1993) and endowment effects (Lerner, Small, & Loewenstein, 2004).

This appraisal tendency perspective sets the stage for predictions about how distinct emotions prioritize specific sociomoral concerns—i.e., ideas about the rules that define ethical, prosocial conduct—and thus promote different moral judgments. In Table 1 we synthesize linkages between distinct emotions and specific sociomoral concerns that we will discuss in this article (although recognizing that additional associations are plausible and that other emotions can also guide moral judgment; for

similar analyses, see Haidt, 2003; Keltner et al., 2006). These linkages derive from research highlighting that certain emotions arise from appraisals with different moral themes (e.g., injustice). Appraisal themes tie the emotion to the specific concerns known to underlie moral judgments across cultures, such as justice, purity, or hierarchy (Haidt & Graham, 2007; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997). Our claims lay the foundation for hypotheses we explore in the following sections: domain and emotion specificity effects in moral judgment, embodiment, and moralization.

Research documents systematic associations between three negative emotions—disgust, anger, and contempt—and concerns about purity, justice, and community roles, respectively (Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999). Disgust links to concerns about the protection of physical and mental purity, or treating the body and mind as temples that ought to be kept free of entities that, although perhaps harmless, are degrading or unwholesome (Haidt & Graham, 2007). Disgust is triggered by objects or behaviors appraised as impure, and research shows that feeling disgusted by moral violations of purity, such as unusual sexual practices, predicts harsher moral criticism of those actions (e.g., Haidt & Hersh, 2001). Anger is associated with justice concerns, or the protection of individual rights, fairness, and autonomy. Appraisals of others’ unjust actions evoke anger, and studies find that greater anger toward actions that violate justice (e.g., an individual prevents another from using a shared resource) predicts greater condemnation of that behavior (Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009, Study 1). Contempt links to concerns about respecting duties and roles within social hierarchies. For example, U.S. and Japanese participants reliably selected an image of a contempt facial expression as their response to immoral actions that involved violating one’s place in the hierarchy (e.g., speaking disrespectfully to a superior) (Rozin et al., 1999).

Other work connects compassion to concerns about caring for and reducing harm to others, particularly those in need. Compassion is aroused by perceptions of need, suffering, or weakness, and motivates prosocial action even if costly to the self (Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010). Research finds that compassion prominently shapes moral judgments of harm and care; for instance, people report greater willingness to help those for whom they feel sympathy (Schmidt & Weiner, 1988).

Table 1 also details associations that have received less attention in the literature on emotion and moral judgment, such

**Table 1.** Linkages between emotions and sociomoral concerns

<i>Emotion</i>	<i>Sociomoral concern</i>
Disgust	Purity of body and mind
Anger	Justice, rights, autonomy
Contempt	Community role, duty
Compassion	Harm/care, weakness, need
Pride	Hierarchy, status, merit
Guilt	Own transgression
Shame	Own characterological flaw
Gratitude	Reciprocity
Awe, elevation	Other’s virtue

as the “self-conscious” emotions of pride, guilt, and shame, and the “other-praising” emotions of gratitude, awe, and elevation. We tie pride to concerns about hierarchy, status, and strength. Pride is evoked by appraisals of the self’s accomplishments and rising social status (Tracy & Robins, 2004), and helps resolve morally relevant decisions, such as how to allocate resources across group members (Shiota, Keltner, & John, 2006). Guilt links to concerns about the self’s transgressions; guilt follows appraisals of having transgressed another individual, and motivates relationship-restoring behaviors (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1992). We associate shame with amplified concerns about one’s own characterological flaws, given that appraisals of the self’s negative attributes instigate shame (Tangney, 1992).

Finally, we consider gratitude, awe, and elevation. Gratitude connects to reciprocity concerns. Gratitude occurs after another has altruistically benefited the self, and motivates repaying prosocial actions in kind (McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001). Awe and elevation arise from the perceived moral virtue of others, notably, others’ benevolence toward third parties (Haidt, 2003; Keltner & Haidt, 2003).

### Domain Specificity Effects on Emotion and Moral Judgment

As noted above, moral judgments reflect particular sociomoral concerns, such as protecting purity or justice. In light of this, one might wonder whether distinct emotions influence moral judgments related to all concerns or only to specific concerns. On the one hand, negative emotions, such as anger or disgust, may prime a global belief that “things are bad,” and lead to more negative views of any action. However, in keeping with work by a number of researchers, our view is that emotions influence moral judgment in a more nuanced manner, through core appraisals that are semantically related to a specific sociomoral concern (e.g., purity) and that remain salient throughout the emotion. Thus, an emotion can heighten the salience and importance of an associated sociomoral concern (e.g., “impurity is bad”), and drive subsequent judgments accordingly (see also Keltner et al., 2006; Lerner & Keltner, 2001). We therefore expect to observe domain specificity effects, wherein a distinct emotion predominantly influences moral judgments about issues that express the associated concern.

New research on the disgust–purity relationship offers one demonstration of these effects. Based on the above claims, we expect disgust to chiefly influence moral judgments about actions that violate or uphold an individual’s purity—an appraisal central to disgust. Although disgust has been found to create harsher attitudes toward immoral behavior in general (Schnall, Haidt, Clore, & Jordan, 2008), recent work suggests that disgust particularly amplifies judgments about issues that evoke purity concerns, such as sexuality. Disgust-prone individuals show heightened prejudice against homosexuals, but not African Americans (Tapias, Glaser, Keltner, Vasquez, & Wickens, 2007), and are especially likely to hold conservative

attitudes vis-à-vis gay marriage and abortion, compared to purity-irrelevant issues like affirmative action (Inbar, Pizarro, & Bloom, 2009). Building on these provocative trait emotion effects—where the causal order of emotion and morality cannot be easily disambiguated—other research has found that induced disgust increased implicit bias against homosexuals but not Arabs, whereas the opposite was true of induced anger (Dasgupta, DeSteno, Williams, & Hunsinger, 2009). Finally, we have found that individuals who were high in trait disgust, or experimentally induced to experience state of disgust, were more critical of a broad array of behaviors perceived as impure, from consuming drugs and alcohol to promiscuity (Horberg et al., 2009). Disgusted individuals were also more likely to praise behaviors viewed as purifying, like meditation and cleanliness. In keeping with domain specificity predictions, disgust did not relate to judgments about actions perceived to violate or uphold justice or harm/care concerns. Notably, in the experimental studies described above, disgust was not elicited by the target of judgment. Disgust moralized purity even when elicited by nonmoral events (e.g., human waste). Such findings suggest that both moral and nonmoral forms of emotion (see Batson, 2011) are closely connected to moral judgment.

Other work suggests domain specificity in the way that anger amplifies moral judgments about matters of justice. A telling example comes from an investigation of the 2001 U.S. terrorist attacks (Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fishcoff, 2003). Shortly after the attacks, a nationally representative sample of participants reported their naturally occurring levels of anger and fear. Several weeks later, via reflection exercises and exposure to terrorist imagery, participants were experimentally manipulated to experience either anger or fear. Subsequently, they rated their support for several governmental policies, including an apparently punitive, justice-restoring policy (“Deport foreigners in the U.S. who lack valid visas”) and a policy that instead promoted reconciliation (“Strengthen ties with countries in the Moslem world”). Relative to fear, naturally occurring and experimentally manipulated anger led to greater support for the justice-restoring policy, but not the reconciliation policy.

Anger has been found to elevate preference for justice-restoring policies in other work as well. Participants in an experiment read news articles designed to induce either anger or sadness (DeSteno, Petty, Rucker, Wegener, & Braverman, 2004). Afterward, ostensibly during a second study, they indicated their attitude and voting intentions regarding an appeal to increase sales tax in their home city. The appeal was framed either in angering, mainly justice-relevant terms (e.g., the tax would help prevent exploitation and fraud in the city’s health care system) or in terms of sadness and loss (e.g., the tax would help prevent inadequate care of special-needs infants). Anger led to more positive attitudes, and higher intentions to vote in favor of the sales tax, when the appeal was framed in terms of anger and justice concerns. Sadness, by contrast, led to greater support for the sales tax when it was framed in terms of sadness and loss. It should be noted, however, that these differential effects of anger and sadness emerged among participants

dispositionally high in the need for cognition (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982), presumably because they processed the appeals more carefully and were thus more susceptible to framing differences following the emotion induction. For our purposes, these results reveal that anger activated a preference for policies that, using our terminology, matched the underlying sociomoral concern of the emotion.

More research is needed to demonstrate the proposed domain specificity of emotions like contempt and gratitude. For example, recent evidence hints that gratitude heightens the perceived value of reciprocating prosocial favors. In studies by Bartlett and DeSteno (2006), individuals manipulated to feel grateful toward a benefactor (ostensibly a fellow research participant) were subsequently more willing to perform an unpleasant task as a favor to their benefactor than individuals manipulated to feel amused. Further work in this realm should find that gratitude, however elicited, increases moral praise of others' acts of reciprocation, compared to actions that enhance purity or the stability of the social hierarchy. Contempt, in prioritizing a community and duty-based morality, should augment moral judgments about actions that violate or uphold the requirements of one's social position (see Rozin et al., 1999).

## Emotion Specificity in the Impact of Emotion on Moral Judgment

Our appraisal-based analysis of the influences of emotions upon moral judgments also posits emotion specificity effects. Specifically, we would expect select emotions, even compared to other emotions of the same valence, to influence judgments linked to specific sociomoral concerns. For example, anger, but not disgust or fear, should influence judgments related to matters of justice.

Early evidence of emotion specificity is found in research comparing individuals who react with anger versus sympathy (labeled "compassion" in Table 1) to the same morally significant event (Weiner, 1980). These studies document, first, that an individual's harmful actions or pleas for assistance will lead to sympathy if the individual is perceived as minimally responsible for his or her situation, but anger if perceived as highly responsible. Second, and crucial to our present interests, moral decisions about punishment and help followed directly from these contrasting emotions.

Consider an illustrative study of public reactions to the 1994 arrest of O.J. Simpson. Among those who believed he was guilty of the alleged double murder, feelings of sympathy toward Simpson—stemming from beliefs about his relative lack of control and responsibility for his actions—predicted preference for less severe, rehabilitation-focused punishment. By contrast, anger toward Simpson, experienced by those who held him responsible for his actions, predicted preference for harsher punishment, with the goal of giving the accused his "just deserts." Critically, lab experiments following up on this correlational study provided more conclusive evidence for the causal role of emotion in the diverging moral pathways of anger and sympathy (Graham et al., 1997).

Related studies revealed parallel emotion specificity effects in people's responses to pleas for assistance (Schmidt & Weiner, 1988). Participants were asked to imagine a needy target, such as a student who asks to borrow the participant's class notes. Sympathy arose out of perceptions that the target was minimally responsible for his or her plight (e.g., because recent medical treatment impeded the target's eyesight) and, in turn, yielded a greater willingness to help. The opposite occurred when participants felt angry toward the target, whom they viewed as responsible for his misfortune (e.g., because he skipped class to go to the beach). Here, participants were less willing to help.

Our recent work extends these emotion specificity findings to different emotions and different moral judgments (Oveis, Horberg, & Keltner, 2010). The question of interest was how positive emotions influence judgments of self–other similarity, which often form the basis for decisions involving moral action (e.g., whether or not to help). Here, inductions of compassion and pride produced contrasting influences on perceptions of whether another group or individual was similar to the self. Overall, compassion promoted feelings of self–other similarity, whereas pride promoted feelings of dissimilarity from others. Additionally, compassion especially increased similarity toward weak others, such as the homeless, consistent with the harm/care concerns we suggest are prioritized by compassion. Pride, by contrast, shifted similarity perceptions according to concerns about strength and status—decreasing similarity to weak others but increasing similarity to strong others, such as professional athletes.

This evidence of emotion specificity is critical to the appraisal tendency framework. It suggests that the emotion's morally significant appraisals, and not just valence, determine the emotion's influence upon moral judgments. Further work is needed to explore this hypothesis. For example, we would expect experiences of pride—but not elevation or compassion—to elevate the perceived virtue of distributing resources according to status or merit. As well, guilt, but not disgust or anger, may sharpen moral judgments about the self. A final intriguing question is how attribution and emotion labeling may factor into emotion specificity (e.g., Schachter & Singer, 1962; Schwarz & Clore, 1983). Perhaps attributing general arousal to distinct emotional states—anger versus disgust or fear, for instance—activates different sociomoral concerns and leads to opposing moral judgments. These and related predictions generated by an appraisal tendency approach await empirical examination.

## Embodiment Effects of Emotions in Moral Judgment

Emotions are embodied phenomena, engaging ancient mammalian response systems that involve skeletal muscle movements and activity within the central and peripheral nervous systems (Keltner & Lerner, 2010). The somatosensory components of emotion can shape memory, attitudes, information processing and decisions (Niedenthal, 2007), and therefore serve as guides to social interaction (Damasio, 1994). In this



section, we explore implications of this work for our appraisal tendency approach, namely, that an emotion's bodily responses amplify specific moral judgments.

Much of the mounting evidence for emotion embodiment effects has focused on diffuse affective states and nonmoral judgments (e.g., Strack, Martin, & Stepper, 1988; Tom, Pettersen, Lau, Burton, & Cook, 1991). The assumption of these studies is that displaying a bodily response associated with general positive or negative affect (e.g., smiling or frowning) causes social judgments to become congruent with the valence of that affect. For instance, participants covertly induced to smile while reading cartoons, by holding a pen with their teeth, rated the cartoons as more humorous than participants prevented from smiling by holding a pen with their lips (Strack et al., 1988). In related work, participants made to smile via the pen manipulation while viewing photographs of unfamiliar Black individuals subsequently showed decreases in implicit bias against Blacks, relative to participants who viewed unfamiliar White individuals or who were not induced to smile (Ito, Chiao, Devine, Lorig, & Cacioppo, 2006).

Other research has explored the role of emotion-related autonomic physiology in value judgments. Research on the *somatic marker hypothesis* finds that physiological responses indicative of negative emotional arousal, namely spikes in skin conductance, can signal the positive or negative value of events. For instance, participants who exhibited higher skin conductance just before making disadvantageous moves in a gambling game soon developed hunches that such moves were detrimental, and avoided them (Bechera, Damasio, Tranel, & Damasio, 1997; Carter & Pasqualini, 2004).

These findings reveal embodiment effects for global affective states. There are analogous effects for distinct emotions. When individuals display a somatic element of a distinct emotion, even beneath awareness, their social judgments shift as if they were subjectively experiencing the emotion. For example, one study tested whether unwittingly posing the prototypical facial expression of anger would lead to greater attributions of human agency for various events—a causal attribution pattern that emerges when individuals feel angry (Keltner et al., 1993). As expected, participants covertly manipulated to pose anger rated future life events as driven more by human agency, and less by situational causes, relative to participants posing sadness. In a different study, the nonverbal postures associated with pride and shame shaped judgments of the self's achievements. Participants who received positive test feedback while sitting in an upright, "proud" posture were prouder of their test performance than participants who received the feedback while sitting slumped over in a posture indicative of shame (Stepper & Strack, 1993).

Finally, new data suggest that disgust-related bodily responses strengthen moral judgments. In one study, disgust primed through repulsive films or offensive odors led to harsher criticism of others' moral transgressions, particularly for individuals highly sensitive to changes in their bodies—preliminary evidence that the somatic aspects of disgust underlie disgust's tendency to strengthen moral judgments (Schnall, Benton, &

Harvey, 2008). In similarly motivated research, participants who washed their hands after watching a disgusting video—an action that lessens disgust—were subsequently less likely to criticize others' transgressions, relative to participants who did not wash their hands (Schnall, & Harvey, 2008; see also Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006).

This emerging literature has important implications for the study of distinct emotions' influence upon moral judgment. The embodied elements of emotions—facial or skeletal muscle movements, activation in peripheral physiology and the neuroendocrine system—prepare the individual to meet specific challenges or opportunities, many of which are moral. An intriguing possibility is that emotion-related activation in the musculature or nervous systems may lead to emotion specificity and domain specificity in moral judgment. Consider, for instance, that disgust, but not anger, is associated with reduced heart rate (Levenson, 1992). We would therefore hypothesize that individuals with reduced heart rate during a disgust experience will make the strongest moral judgments about actions involving purity and impurity. However, individuals with large increases in heart rate during anger should make the strongest moral judgments about justice and injustice. Likewise, we would expect amplified purity or justice moral judgments among individuals manipulated to pose the facial expressions of disgust or anger, respectively.

This line of reasoning also applies to emotion-related neuroendocrine response and moral judgment. For example, we would expect the release of oxytocin to promote a care-focused moral ethic. The peptide oxytocin is involved in attachment behaviors like maternal bonding and lactation, and in feelings of compassion, love, and trust (Keltner & Lerner, 2010; Kosfeld, Heinrichs, Zak, Fischbacher, & Fehr, 2005). Bridging this with our framework, we would speculate that high levels of oxytocin can specifically increase moral judgments focused on care and harm reduction, such as greater willingness to forego personal interests in order to help others, or preference for rehabilitation-focused punishments. These predictions, while compelling, remain speculative pending empirical investigation.

## Implications for Distinct Emotions in Moralization

We have considered how different emotions amplify different moral judgments at the level of the individual. Emotions, however, also serve important group and cultural functions (Frijda & Mesquita, 1994; Keltner & Haidt, 1999), and have critical implications for cultural shifts in moral rules. Our analysis holds that distinct emotions can help account for which kinds of issues attain moral significance within a particular society or generation.

The process by which moral judgments become embedded into broader value systems, often through emotions, has been called *moralization* (Rozin, 1997; Rozin, Markwith, & Stoess, 1997). Prominent examples in the USA include increasing intolerance of cigarette smoking and meat eating (Rozin, 1999).

These moralization processes can guide broader social policy both at an informal level, by defining which actions people feel licensed to censure, and at an institutional level, by influencing laws and sanctions.

The transition in U.S. attitudes toward smoking during the second half of the 20th century clearly illustrates moralization. Previously permissive attitudes gave way to explicit condemnation of smoking, along with negative emotional reactions (Rozin & Singh, 1999). Hotel rooms became segregated by smoking status, expressions of contempt toward smokers became more frequent, several states banned smoking in public, and inflated “sin” taxes were levied on cigarettes. Moreover, merely smelling smoke or coming into contact with a person who recently smoked became an elicitor of disgust (Rozin, 1999; Rozin & Singh, 1999).

These observations raise an important question: Which issues are likely to undergo moralization? Previous work suggests that issues framed in terms of suffering or unfair treatment of others are easily moralized in the U.S., a culture in which harm/care and justice concerns are dominant (e.g., Vasquez, Keltner, Ebenbach, & Banaszynski, 2001). This was likely the case with smoking, which, in the 1980s and 1990s, was met with ad campaigns highlighting the dangers of secondhand smoke and premature death due to lung cancer (Rozin & Singh, 1999).

Our appraisal tendency approach would also suggest that different sociomoral issues are subject to moralization when relevant emotions are involved. One interesting example involves the emergence of the conservative morality and liberal morality in the U.S. Whereas liberals tend to exclusively emphasize harm/care and justice concerns, conservatives additionally place importance on purity, as well as on hierarchy (e.g., respect for authority) and loyalty to the ingroup (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009). The emotion of disgust may help account for these diverging politics, at least with respect to differences on purity-relevant social issues (see Inbar et al., 2009). Among conservatives, the consistent pairing of disgust with issues such as gay marriage or abortion may create a sense of moral urgency that has consequences for policy-making and political strategies such as the formation of coalitions and organization of protests. By contrast, in liberals, those same issues may be decoupled from disgust, or paired more strongly with anger or compassion—for example, when people perceive bans on gay marriage as breaches of civil rights or the cause of undue suffering. The consequences of this process for policy would be, of course, strikingly different.

Distinct emotions may also moralize specific prosocial actions, although empirical work in this area is currently scarce. This can happen, we postulate, through negative emotions, such as when disgust enhances the perceived virtue of purifying behaviors (Horberg et al., 2009). Positive emotions may also trigger the moralization of prosocial actions. For example, individuals who witness the selfless acts of others often experience elevation, which triggers people’s own desire to act prosocially (Algoe & Haidt, 2009). As a cycle of benevolence perpetuates within a community, these actions may ultimately become

moral standards. Future research is likely to find that other positive emotions, such as gratitude and compassion, are not only affective reactions to moral events, but also catalysts of the moralization process in ways that reflect emotion and domain specificity effects. We anticipate that the experience and expression of gratitude, but not emotions like pride or joy, will be found to play a role in how deeply a particular society moralizes acts of reciprocity, while being unrelated to the moralization of other issues.

## Concluding Remarks

Today’s pressing social and political issues deeply engage moral beliefs. Timely examples include support of, or opposition to, abortion, gay marriage, immigrant rights, or the deployment of national troops to resolve foreign conflicts. We have proposed that such issues are powerfully shaped by the experience of certain emotions. Emotions, by our analysis, serve to safeguard the specific ethics, such as care-taking, justice, or purity, that allow people to live together harmoniously.

We have reviewed several emerging areas of inquiry that illuminate this process, and have highlighted areas that await further research. Ultimately, this kind of work may not only shed further light on the precise workings of the moral mind, but may also improve our understanding of the psychology that underlies social reform.

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