On the "Exporting" of Morality: Its Relation to Political Conservatism and Epistemic Motivation

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Abstract A new phenomenon, *moral exporting* (ME), is introduced to capture active attempts to promote certain views of morality to others. It was hypothesized that political conservatives would be more likely to exhibit ME, due in part to strong epistemic concerns for certainty that may become attached to the moral domain. Related items from the 1988 and 2006 General Social Surveys were analyzed, and new scales were developed to better assess ME and specific moral-related epistemic concerns (moral absolutism). In a second study, these scales were administered to a large college student sample along with measures of political ideology and need for closure (NFC). Results generally showed that political conservatism was strongly related to the new ME factor. Further analysis determined that both moral absolutism (MA) and NFC accounted for significant portions of this relationship, but that the specific epistemic construct (MA) was a more proximal mediator. Discussion centers on further distinguishing ME and MA from related constructs, as well as on future research and applications.

Keywords Conservatism · Defense · Epistemic motivation · Morality · Need for closure · Uncertainty

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Many people have their own idea of what it means to be a morally good person. Such beliefs can be traced to religion, a set of more secular ethics, or concerns about the nature of justice and fairness, among other potential sources. Regardless of the way in which individuals acquire moral beliefs, what is clear is that there is a tremendous degree of moral diversity. There appears to be a lack of consensus, across cultures and historical epochs, in virtually every facet of significant life practices, and many of these carry a distinct moral element. Is it acceptable to own another human being as a slave? To whip a misbehaved child? To eat the flesh of another animal? To abort a 2-month-old fetus? The different answers that individuals and institutions supply to such questions are just a few examples of the tremendous variability we see in human moral beliefs and practices.

Regardless of the actual variability in moral beliefs, however, people often perceive their own moral beliefs to be the "right" ones (e.g., McGregor, 2006; McGregor, Zanna, Holmes, & Spencer, 2001). For these people, who are high in what we will refer to as *moral absolutism* (MA), the diversity found in the moral domain can create an appreciable amount of uncertainty and threat that humans in general are often motivated to manage and resolve. This paper seeks to introduce and assess one potential way in which moral absolutists may choose to cope with this uncertainty, a strategy we have termed *moral exporting* (ME). Moral exporting is characterized by the willingness to actively promote and support the proliferation of one's own moral beliefs, introducing a strong action-orientated component to such beliefs. Importantly, we attempt to examine political ideology and its morality-related epistemic motivations (moral absolutism) as correlates of ME to identify who may be most likely to use ME as an uncertainty-reduction strategy. We hypothesize that individuals who adopt a more conservative ideological orientation may seek to reduce uncertainty by actively persuading and "converting" others to their own views through ME, and this relationship may be explained by MA.[1]

In the following, we provide a brief overview of research on epistemic motivation and argue that adopting clear-cut moral beliefs and convictions, in particular, may come to address such general epistemic motives. Further emphasizing the proposed active nature of ME, we propose that the phenomenon is strongly embedded within interpersonal and intragroup processes, such as consensus-seeking (McGregor, Nail, Marigold, & Kang, 2005; Morris et al., 1976), shared belief systems (Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Kruglanski, Pierro, Mannetti, & DeGrada, 2006), interpersonal self-regulation (Rhodewalt & Peterson, 2008), and religious group affiliation (e.g., Pergament, 2002; Silberman, 2005). We then review some related research on political conservatism suggesting that conservatism should be positively correlated with both MA and ME. Finally, two sets of data are presented that provide initial support for the existence of ME and MA as distinct phenomena, as well as for the hypothesis that those who adopt a conservative ideology may be especially likely to engage in ME—in part because their moral beliefs are more absolute. These data also generate important questions to be addressed in future

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[1] It is important to note that this is only one of several strategies an individual may employ to deal with the threat of uncertainty that moral diversity inherently stimulates. Some may choose to avoid, or even actively derogate, those with different views. This will be discussed further in the General Discussion.

research on the phenomenon. Throughout, the main emphasis is on the process by which moral beliefs are used to address uncertainty needs, and how this process is related to conservative ideology.

Potential Sources of Motivation for Exporting Morality

Several classic studies in social psychology have revealed that when people perceive a discrepancy between their own attitudes and those of others, they engage in "social tuning" behavior designed to reduce uncertainty and align divergent viewpoints (Asch, 1955; Schachter & Singer, 1962; Sherif, 1936). As research in this area progressed, an understanding of the motivations behind social tuning became clearer. For instance, when people are high in epistemic motivation (i.e., they are motivated to acquire knowledge, often for the purpose of coming to a firm decision; Kruglanski, 1989), they are more likely to tune into the attitudes of those in their immediate surroundings. Such chronic differences in epistemic motivation lead people to both align their own attitudes with attitudes of another person (Kruglanski, Webster, & Klem, 1993), and to more strongly uphold the attitudes of an ingroup (Grieve & Hogg, 1999; Shah, Kruglanski, & Thompson, 1998). In addition, such research shows that even situational manipulations of epistemic motivation can lead to adoption of the perceived implicit preferences of other people (Lun, Sinclair, Whitchurch, & Glenn, 2007). Shared Reality Theory (Hardin & Conley, 2001; Hardin & Higgins, 1996) connects these phenomena by proposing that people engage in such behavior because perceiving the world as others do fulfills both affiliative and epistemic needs.

Such epistemic motivation toward shared realities does not, however, imply that our views will always shift toward those of others. When confronted with discrepancies between what one strongly believes in and what someone else believes (or how he or she acts), an individual has several options in how to deal with the situation. Because of natural biases toward the self (e.g., Baumeister, 1998; Greenwald, 1980) and the ingroup from which a person's beliefs often originate (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986), there is a strong tendency for individuals to consider their own point of view as more correct (egocentric bias). The mere presence of a conflicting point of view, however, may make one's own convictions more vulnerable to uncertainty (Festinger, 1954; Greenberg et al., 1990; van den Bos, Euwema, Poortvliet, & Maas, 2007). If an individual is able to tolerate a degree of uncertainty in their beliefs (yet remain committed to the views they hold), then he or she will likely be more accepting of discrepant beliefs and behaviors, and take no further action. On the other hand, if one's tolerance for uncertainty has exceeded some threshold, or if there is a fundamental commitment to the beliefs in question, then it becomes increasingly unlikely that this discrepancy will be ignored. Beyond simply dismissing their views, one means of reducing uncertainty may be attempting to convince non-adherents of the validity of one's own views. By achieving further consensus on what moral beliefs and behaviors are valid, one eliminates the uncertainty that is implied in moral diversity while at the same time affirming one's own beliefs (Festinger, 1954).

In support of this idea, research has shown that a person's epistemic need for cognitive closure can be satisfied by homogeneity of opinion in groups, but only if this homogeneity is close to one's own perspective (Kruglanski, Shah, Pierro, & Mannetti, 2002; see also Kruglanski et al., 2006). For people high in epistemic concerns that focus on *firm* answers, such as those with a high need for closure (NFC) (Kruglanski, 1990), this suggests that perceived attitude discrepancies on important issues should be more likely to result in behavior with the explicit purpose of bringing others into line with the self (rather than the self in line with others) via ME.

Constructs such as NFC, need for personal structure, and uncertainty avoidance, however, are more general epistemic constructs—they represent nonspecific needs for certainty, order, and confidence in one's beliefs. These nonspecific needs can be translated into more specific manifestations depending on the affordances and constraints of the situation (Kruglanski, 1990), but it is likely that individuals with chronic epistemic concerns also "seize" on certain worldviews that potentially provide a consistent resource of certainty. These may include morality (as well as religious beliefs more broadly defined). The mixing of epistemic concerns and moral beliefs could produce a psychological concoction such that moral beliefs and guidelines become absolutes (e.g., Janoff-Bulman & Sheikh, 2006). In this case, the individual is not only uncomfortable with the uncertainty that results from others holding different views of morality and therefore motivated to engage in strategies to change the others' beliefs; rather, since such beliefs help to answer the ultimate questions of "right and wrong" and "good and evil", they may in fact feel *compelled* to perform this role (i.e., to "save" the "souls" of others).

For these reasons, we believe that general epistemic concerns have important implications for how specific moral convictions may come to be held in an absolutist manner, and why moral absolutists might be motivated to export them. Not only are moral convictions explicitly motivational constructs (Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005), but the act of asserting convictions may help to address uncertainty (McGregor, 2006). We argue that one important way that individuals can assert their moral convictions is through promoting them to others who may not share the same beliefs (and who thus threaten the certainty of those beliefs). In this way, they can reduce some uncertainty by asserting such beliefs, while also potentially establishing greater consensus in their beliefs by persuading other people to adopt these.

While such an emphasis on an absolute view of morality to alleviate epistemic concerns may leave an individual vulnerable to personal uncertainty threat resulting from diverse perspectives (e.g., Rhodewalt & Peterson, 2008), there is great power in *consensus* to provide an individual with certainty (Festinger, 1954; Schachter & Singer, 1962). Those who are uncertain tend to turn to others for validation, information, and support (e.g., Morris et al., 1976). Going beyond this affiliative and informational function of other people with like beliefs, we argue that some individuals with strong epistemic concerns (i.e., moral absolutists) will not simply be satisfied with the consensus provided by similar others. Rather, they will also feel the need to actively pursue others who hold different beliefs through ME, as the

mere existence of such people is threatening in and of itself. In a sense, they will be motivated to *create* the consensus they seek.[2]

While the description thus far focuses on the interpersonal aspect of the phenomenon, it is just as (if not more) likely to play out in the realm of intergroup relations. In other words, those who share one's beliefs generally come to be categorized as members of an ingroup, while those who support different beliefs and behaviors are categorized as outside of that group (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherall, 1987; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). Groups can be a powerful source of shared reality (Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Kruglanski et al., 2006), certainty (e.g., Reid & Hogg, 2005), and thus consensus. For example, an individual seeking moral certainty may find a welcome home in religious groups, especially ones that promote a more Evangelical and/or fundamentalist doctrine (e.g., Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992). As such, one group may come to view their own moral convictions as the most "right", and the presence of other groups with differing views creates a similarly threatening situation. On this larger scale, conversion (i.e., educating or "helping"), forced imposition, or outright elimination of other views are potential options for the group or its individual members. It is not surprising, then, that many religions emphasize missionary work, which has the explicit goal of converting "nonbelievers" to that group's interpretation of morality. This is in line with our idea of ME—the more conversions such a group achieves, the less uncertainty-arousing differences of opinion exist in the world.

In sum, what others believe is very important to the individual in defining and validating their moral worldview. This social construction and confirmation of moral beliefs is a step that allows individuals to address and alleviate epistemic concerns. Of course, one of our main arguments is that there will be important differences between people in how powerful the need to engage this process is. For some, morality becomes a potential vehicle for epistemic certainty—it encourages a strict definition of morality that is unwavering and without compromise (moral absolutism). At this point, the moral beliefs must face a "social reality" test, which presents the potential for ME. However, who might be more chronically prone to these epistemic concerns that encourage ME? In the next section, we look to political ideology as a potential correlate.

The Role of Political Ideology in the Motivational Process

An important part of this investigation into the nature of ME is a consideration of individual differences in the characteristics of people who endorse it. Moral exporting as we have defined it is a phenomenon that is likely to emerge in a broad variety of situations, from everyday small-talk among friends, to diplomatic negotiations on the international stage. Besides religion, perhaps the most public and easily observable context is that of political decision-making, which has

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[2] Once again, some moral absolutists may choose to deal with such threats by avoiding and/or derogating those individuals and groups who elicit such uncertainty. However, others may choose the more benevolent "exporting" strategy.

implications for how a country defines both written and unwritten laws of behavior. On the one hand, for totalitarian nations governed by dictatorship, it could be only the ME tendencies of the leader, which determine how morals, laws, and norms get defined for its citizens. On the other hand, for democratic societies such as the United States, the degree to which each of its voting citizens engages in ME is of great importance, because these are the people who elect legislators, vote on amendments, and by extension create the moral environment in which they live. Thus, as a preliminary investigation of this behavior in the United States, we chose to examine ME as a potential correlate of political ideology.

We began with consideration of the liberal–conservative landscape along which the American public generally organizes itself (Conover & Feldman, 1981; Jost, 2006; Tomkins, 1963). Along this dimension, we hypothesized that conservatives would be more likely to adopt attitudes and behaviors that are indicative of ME. Recent research has found that conservatives are more likely to engage in "political proselytizing" behavior, such as active participation in political talk radio (Hollander, 1997). Moreover, Evangelical social conservatives have been famously effective at rallying followers around issues such as gay marriage, abortion, and stem cell research, creating powerful voting blocs at the polls (Kellstedt, Green, Guth, & Smidt, 1996). Such trends suggest that, at least in the United States, conservatives are perhaps more motivated than liberals to define the morals of the nation unambiguously as the letter of the law, according to their own perspective.

The literature on the different epistemic motives that drive conservatives and liberals sheds light on why conservatives might be more likely to engage in ME behavior. One of the core components of conservative ideology is resistance to change, ambiguity, or uncertainty (Altemeyer, 1998; Frenkel-Brunswick, 1948; Wilson & Patterson, 1968). Only recently, however, have researchers begun to show that people differ in important ways on chronic epistemic needs related to uncertainty, and that some may adopt a conservative ideology specifically to satisfy such social-cognitive motives (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003). Specifically, a meta-analysis of 88 samples in 12 countries with over 20,000 participants revealed that conservatism is positively correlated with intolerance of ambiguity, dogmatic beliefs, uncertainty avoidance, and needs for order, structure, and cognitive closure. Moreover, conservatism was negatively associated with integrative complexity and openness to experience. This pattern of correlations across such a large number of participants suggests that those least tolerant of uncertainty are more likely to adhere to conservative ideologies.

If this is the case, then differences in epistemic motivations should not only be associated with specific ideologies, but also to other behaviors related to these needs. Indeed, conservatives are generally less tolerant than their liberal counterparts of individuals and groups who hold opposing political views (Guth & Green, 1991). Moreover, this desire to create and maintain a shared reality can launch behaviors typical of ME, such as rejecting opinion deviates, and pressure to change others' opinions. Research has demonstrated that the greater the degree of shared reality in a person's reference group, the more it can satisfy that individual's need for cognitive closure (Kruglanski et al., 1993; Kruglanski et al., 2006). Thus, those higher in NFC should be more motivated to attain shared reality within a reference

group, leading to intolerance of diversity in opinion—something that is directly related to our conception of MA.

To be sure, our argument is not that, removed from those who adopt it, conservative ideology is objectively more delineated or absolutist in its moral content. We do suggest, however, that on average conservatives should be more likely than liberals to view their own morals as absolute truths, and attempt to persuade others to adopt this set of moral beliefs. We argue that such a pattern emerges because those who adopt a conservative ideology to satisfy stronger epistemic needs for certainty may simultaneously use ME as a means of satisfying such needs.

Hypotheses and Overview of Current Research

In sum, the current research proposes two new constructs: moral absolutism (MA) as a measure of the degree to which people believe that their own definition of morality is objectively correct, and moral exporting (ME) to capture the tendency for some people to take an active role in trying to get others to adopt these moral beliefs. In the current research, we think of MA as an individual difference in the perception of the objective truth of one's own set of moral beliefs, stemming from epistemic motivations for certainty. ME, on the other hand, is described as a more strategic behavioral construct that arises from individual differences in MA as individuals and groups attempt to negotiate and confirm certain ways of thinking about morality among those within and outside the group. In addition, political conservatism is identified as a likely correlate of ME, precisely because those who self-identify as conservatives also tend to have strong epistemic needs for certainty (such as MA).

Thus, the main hypotheses are as follows. First, we expect a strong association between political conservatism and ME. Second, because we reason that this relationship has more to do with conservatives' epistemic needs for certainty in the moral domain than with the content of conservative ideology, we expect that this relationship between conservatism and ME will diminish when controlling for MA. To test these ideas, we first constructed our mediation models using a large-scale representative social survey (General Social Survey), which provided proxy measures of our constructs of interest. From this, we then developed self-report scales that more effectively assessed the constructs of interest (ME, MA) in a large college student sample.

Study 1: Initial Test Using the General Social Survey

Method

Procedure and Participants

We located an existing dataset, the General Social Survey, as a preliminary test of whether (i) political conservatives would be more likely to endorse attitudes

consistent with ME, and (ii) whether this effect would be partially due to conservatives' stronger epistemic concerns. The General Social Survey (GSS) is a personal interview survey carried out by the National Opinion Research Center, providing high-quality nationally representative data on a wide variety of attitudinal measures. The GSS has been conducted annually from 1972 to 1994, and biennially since 1994.

As a first step, we located attitudinal and behavioral items that broadly fit under the constructs of MA or ME. Because we planned to test a path model, items capturing each construct needed to be jointly available for inclusion in the analysis. Given this criterion, we were only able to examine items from the 1988 and 2006 GSS datasets (see below). The GSS surveyed 5,991 respondents across the 1988 and 2006 surveys. From this sample, 4,204 respondents had usable data for the present analysis (i.e., responded to all three of the MA, ME, and political orientation items used in Study 1), and all other participants were excluded from the analysis. The remaining group was 57% female, with a median age of 44 years (range = 18–89 years). The sample consisted of 77% Caucasian participants, 13% African-American participants, and 10% from other ethnicities.

Operationalizing the Constructs of Interest

Moral Absolutism　We were able to locate a single item which we believe faithfully captured respondent's epistemic desire (or lack thereof) for closure and certainty in the moral domain. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate how much they agree or disagree with the statement, "Right and wrong are not usually a simple matter of black and white; there are many shades of gray." Participants were given the response options *Agree Strongly* (1), *Agree Somewhat* (2), *Disagree Somewhat* (3), or *Disagree Strongly* (4). MA was operationalized as the extent that participants disagreed with this statement.

Moral Exporting　We operationalized ME as whether participants agreed or disagreed with the following question, "Have you ever tried to encourage someone to believe in Jesus Christ or to accept Jesus Christ as his or her savior?" Participants responded either *No* or *Yes* (dummy coded as 0 and 1, respectively) to this question. Because this item is directed toward respondents of Christian faith, we only included Christian respondents in the analysis (see "Covariates"). Although this question focuses on religious beliefs, we believe it captures a key component of ME, in that it assesses how willing participants are to convince others to accept their own personal values.

Political Ideology　A single item assessed self-reported political orientation on a 7-point scale, with response options ranging from *Extremely Liberal* (1) to *Moderate* (4) to *Extremely Conservative* (7).

Covariates　We expected conservative political ideology to predict ME, and that this effect would be partly explained by MA. An obvious problem with the approach

Table 1 List of covariate variables used in Study 1

Variable	Coding
Age[a]	18 = 18 years to 89 = 89 years
Sex[b]	−1 = male; 1 = female
Race[b]	
Caucasian vs. minority	2/3 = Caucasian; −1/3 = African-American; −1/3 = Other minority
African-American vs. other minority	0 = Caucasian; 1/2 = African American; −1/2 = Other minority
Years of education[a]	0 = 0 years completed to 20 = 20 years completed
Household income[a]	(Adjusted to 2006 dollar value; range $1,450–273,140)
Strength of religious affiliation[b]	−1 = not very strong; 0 = somewhat strong; 1 = strong

[a] Continuous variable

[b] Contrast-coded categorical variables

used in this study to test these claims is that political ideology covaries with a host of important demographic variables (see Jost et al., 2003). It is possible that some of these variables could drive the results (with political orientation only serving as a proxy). Indeed, our ME item is specifically directed at those of Christian faith, so it seems possible that the relationship between political conservatism and ME may have more to do with religious affiliation and religiosity than with MA. In order to address this concern, we only included participants who self-identified as Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox Christian, or "Christian" ($N = 3,429$). We also included an item measuring strength of religious affiliation (*strong, somewhat strong,* or *not very strong*). In addition to the religion items, analyses were performed including participant's age, sex, race, years of completed education, and household income (adjusted for inflation to 2006) as covariates in the analysis. Table 1 displays how these items were coded in the analysis.[3]

Results

Testing a Mediation Model

We first examined whether political conservatives would be more likely than liberals to endorse attitudes consistent with ME. Using a logistic regression, we regressed ME on political orientation (see Step 1 of Table 2). As expected, self-reported conservatives were more likely to report having encouraged some to believe in Jesus Christ as their savior, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 55.69$, $p < .01$, odds ratio [OR] = 1.21 (95% CI = 1.15–1.27). We then simultaneously regressed political orientation and all other covariate predictors. As shown in Step 2 of Table 2, these covariates had little influence on the relationship between political orientation and ME, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 33.73$, $p < .01$, OR = 1.21 (95% CI = 1.14–1.28).

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[3] In order to examine if the basic pattern of results differed across the 1988 and 2006 data sets, we also examined if survey year interacted with political orientation and MA in predicting ME. It did not (both Wald χ^2s < .15, *ns*).

Table 2 Odds ratios from logistic regression analyses on ME in the General Social Survey (Study 1)

Predictor	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Political conservatism	1.21 [1.15–1.27]	1.21 [1.14–1.28]	1.17 [1.10–1.24]
Year		.82 [.73–.93]	.83 [.74–.95]
Sex		1.12 [1.03–1.21]	1.14 [1.05–1.23]
Caucasian vs. minority		.55 [.45–.67]	.56 [.46–.68]
African-American vs. other minority		2.74 [1.94–3.87]	2.87 [2.03–4.05]
Years of education		.96 [.93–.99]	.97 [.94–.99]
Household income		.99 [.99–.99]	.99 [.99–.99]
Strength of religious affiliation		2.07 [1.90–2.25]	2.00 [1.84–2.17]
Moral absolutism			1.35 [1.23–1.48]

Note: Ninety-five percent CIs are given in brackets. All items are statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level

Next, we tested whether political conservatives were also more likely to endorse the MA item. Consistent with past research on political conservatism and epistemic motivation (Jost et al., 2003), we found that conservatism (once again, holding all other demographic variables constant) was positively associated with the belief that morality is more often a matter of black and white, rather than shades of grey, $b = .10$, $SE = .01$, $p < .01$, $PRE = .02$.

Finally, in order to examine whether our MA item mediated the relationship between political ideology and ME [based on methods described by Judd and Kenny (1981) and Baron and Kenny (1986)], we submitted ME to a logistic regression using MA, political ideology, and all other covariate controls as predictors (Step 3 of Table 2). We found a diminished (but nonetheless significant) relationship between political conservatism and ME, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 27.67$, $p < .01$, OR $= 1.17$ (95% CI $= 1.10$–1.24) This partial mediation, with MA mediating 15.1% of the direct effect, was reliable according to a Sobel test, $z = 5.21$, $p < .01$.

Discussion

Using a nationally representative data set, we found support for our hypothesis that political conservatism would be positively associated with endorsement of a behavior consistent with ME. Also consistent with our account, this relationship appeared to be due, in part, to political conservatives' tendency to think of morality in an absolute manner (represented by black–white thinking about right and wrong). Furthermore, this set of relations held even after controlling for a number of demographic variables, and was found in two surveys conducted nearly 20 years apart, suggesting that our model is both robust and stable over time.

There are, however, a number of obvious limitations to the initial study, which warrant caution in interpreting the results. First, the target items that were used in the analysis were not originally constructed to tap into the theoretical constructs of MA and ME per se, but rather were chosen from an existing data set designed to measure general opinions and attitudes. As a result of this, we were only able to find a single item each for which we could examine participants' MA and ME tendencies.

Moreover, the ME item has obvious limitations—it was a question involving religious proselytizing that was only applicable to Christian participants. It is not clear whether ME is independent of one's religious faith (as we believe it is), nor whether the items we used in our analysis truly captured the constructs of interest.

In order to address these concerns, we conducted a second study that allowed us to more thoroughly examine the relations among political ideology, epistemic concerns involving certainty, and ME. This time, using multiple items to test for both a general NFC and a specific orientation toward MA, as well as ME, we were able to achieve a firmer grasp on how these constructs are related to political ideology.

Study 2: A New Scale and Further Test of the Model

Our analyses of the GSS data suggested that one of the reasons why conservatives exhibit ME is that they are more likely to think about morality in black and white terms. In other words, MA partially explains the correlation between conservatism and ME. However, because our measures of ME and MA were merely conceptual proxies of our true concepts of interest, we chose to examine these relationships using specifically designed measures. In order to do this, we constructed new self-report scales to measure the degree to which people view their morals as absolutely correct (MA) and the degree to which they are willing to proselytize and otherwise promote these morals to other people (ME). The predictions are similar to those for the GSS data, though this study allows us to replicate our analysis of how epistemic motives in the moral domain may account for stronger ME tendencies among conservatives with more reliable measurements.

Method

Participants

Participants were 544 undergraduates (297 female, 247 male) who completed this study as part of an online laboratory mass testing at the University of Utah, and they received credit in their psychology course for participation. The average age of all participants was 21.57 ($SD = 4.75$). The entire sample consisted of 451 White/Caucasian (82.9%), 51 Asian/Pacific Islander (9.2%), 23 Hispanic/Latino (4.2%), and 4 Black/African-American (<1%) participants, as well as 16 who identified themselves as "other ethnicity" (3.0%). A total of 395 (72.6%) identified a religious affiliation, and of these, 247 (62.5%) identified with the dominant religion of Utah, the Latter-Day Saints (LDS, or "Mormon").

Procedure

Participants completed the measures of interest as part of an online mass testing survey that served as a recruiting pool for another unrelated study. Each participant received a link to the survey through electronic mail after signing up for the study, and then followed the link and completed the measures independently. The survey

generally took participants around 30 min to complete, and response times and patterns were monitored to ensure that participants completed all the questions according to the instructions. Within each scale, items were presented in random order to participants, though the order of the scales themselves was constant.

After providing their consent, participants answered various demographic questions, including sex, age, ethnic background, religious affiliation, and monthly religious attendance. The left–right self-placement item was also included on the same. Then, after several scales unrelated to the current research, participants completed the Need for Closure Scale (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). After several more unrelated scales, they were then asked to think about what morality meant to them personally and were given a space to type open-ended thoughts about their definition of morality. Once this writing exercise was completed, participants completed both the MA scale and the ME scale, both constructed for the purposes of the current research (see below and Table 3), in reference to the moral beliefs they had previously written about.

Predictor and Criterion Measures

Political Conservatism   For political ideology and orientation, participants were asked to locate themselves on a 7-point scale anchored by 1 (*very liberal*) and 7

Table 3 Items and unstandardized factor loadings for moral absolutism and moral exporting scales (MA–ME factor correlation = .69)

	MA	ME
Moral absolutism scale		
Right and wrong are not usually a simple matter of black and white; there are many shades of gray (R)	.63	–
There are absolutely clear guidelines about what is good and evil. These always apply to everyone, whatever the circumstances	.68	–
There is really only one proper way to think and behave morally	.80	–
"Morality" is relative to each person—there is no truly "correct" set of rules that should govern one's conduct (R)	.71	–
Any other moral values or ways of thinking and behaving that conflict with my conception of morality are wrong	.66	–
The moral values and beliefs that help to enrich my life may not necessarily work for everyone (R)	.69	–
Moral exporting scale		
When I meet someone who doesn't share the moral values that are important to me, I take the time to explain my views in an effort to convince them that they are worth living by	–	.64
Sometimes people live in places that operate under different moral values than these. In this case, it's important to explain how their lives would improve by adopting these moral values as their own	–	.70
I have supported (or would support) organizations that advocate these moral values (including membership, giving time, and/or donating money)	–	.48
I believe that these moral values should be reflected in this country's legal system	–	.58

(*very conservative*), with the midpoint of the scale (4) labeled as *moderate*. Thus, the higher the number that the participant endorsed, the more conservative he or she considered himself or herself to be. The mean political ideology score for the sample was 3.63 (*SD* = 1.39).

Moral Exporting   Inherent in our conceptualization of ME is the idea that people reflect upon the content and utility of their own moral values and then may attempt to encourage the assimilation of others to those values. Therefore, we wanted participants to answer questions about moral attitudes in the context of their personal beliefs, not merely a general conception of morality as a whole. Thus, before completing the moral exporting and absolutism scales, we instructed participants to reflect briefly upon their values and then to keep them in mind when answering the questions that followed. The following instructions were given:

> Please take a moment to think about what "morality" means to you personally. How would you define this concept? More specifically, what are some <u>moral values</u> that you think are important to live according to (e.g., racial/ethnic/gender equality, freedom of speech, protecting the sanctity of life or the freedom to choose, being loyal to one's group, etc.)? What are some attitudes and behaviors that reflect "morality", according to your conception of it? Once you have thought about this, please use the space below to express your personal definition of morality, using the moral values, principles, attitudes, and behaviors requested in the questions above to illustrate this definition. Take as much of the space as you need to fully describe your personal conception of "morality" (and what it means to be "moral").[4]

After considering their own morals, we measured participants' endorsement of several ME behaviors hypothesized by our theoretical model. The final ME Scale contained four items that targeted how willing participants were to attempt to convince others to adopt these moral beliefs and support groups or causes that promoted their moral views (see Table 3).

Participants rated their level of agreement with each item on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). The items exhibited adequate reliability as a set (α = .69), and thus were averaged together to form a single measure of ME tendencies (*M* = 3.64, *SD* = .93).

Nonspecific and Specific Epistemic Motivation Measures

Our model implies that conservatives are more likely to exhibit ME tendencies, and that part of the reason for this is that such behavior satisfies epistemic motivation for certainty in the moral domain (MA). Because the concept of MA is related to more general epistemic motivations concerning closure, certainty, and shared reality, we also measured participants' general need for cognitive closure (NFC; Webster &

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[4] These open-ended responses were not analyzed for this article, as the focus here is on the construct of ME independent of content. It may be important to consider differences in content as related to political ideology in future research, and this is considered further in the General Discussion.

Kruglanski, 1994). In so doing, we were able to adjust for its effects on ME and to establish MA as a separate construct.

Moral Absolutism This scale was designed to measure the degree to which participants think their own moral values are reflections of an objective moral landscape. In other words, the higher participants scored on this scale, the more they endorsed the idea that morals should not vary by culture, person, or situation because they are "true" according to a standard that exists outside of these factors. Moreover, higher scores on this measure reflect the degree to which participants see their own set of morals values as the only correct set that could be adopted, to the extent that deviations from this set of values in a given person or culture constitutes immorality. Therefore, we asked participants to rate the degree to which they agreed with six statements reflecting these ideas (see Table 3) on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). As with the ME Scale, participants were instructed to answer the questions with their own values in mind. This set of questions included the item we used to assess this construct in the GSS analyses ("Right and wrong are not usually a simple matter of black and white; there are many shades of gray"). The scale exhibited good internal consistency ($\alpha = .84$), so the items were averaged to form a single measure of MA ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.10$).

Need for Closure The NFC scale is a 42-item self-report scale developed by Webster and Kruglanski (1994). It was designed to assess stable individual differences in the need for cognitive closure, and previous research has established its validity (e.g., Shah et al., 1998). Participants rate the extent of agreement on 6-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*) with statements reflecting either a preference for closure (e.g., "I'd rather know bad news than stay in a state of uncertainty") or a preference to avoid closure (e.g., "I tend to put off making important decisions until the last possible moment," reverse-scored). The mean score for this sample was 3.73 ($SD = .43$), and the scale displayed adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .82$).

Results

Factor Structure and Relationship Between New Scales

We conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to establish both the reliability of our two scales and their distinctiveness from one another. In so doing, we expected that MA and ME would be separate, but related constructs.

In order to begin, we tested the fit of a one-factor versus a two-factor model for the items of the two scales, as the two constructs are theoretically related. If the items did not reliably load onto ME and MA as two separate factors, then our model testing the relationships between these constructs and political ideology would be in question. We used the variance–covariance matrix of the ten items to estimate the loadings for a factor structure assuming a single factor, with uncorrelated error terms. This model was not a very good fit for the data, $\chi^2(35) = 276.39$, GFI = .90,

RMSEA = .11 [95% CI .10, .13], suggesting that the items do not represent the same underlying construct. We then tested a two-factor model, specifying that the six items designed to represent MA loaded onto one factor, and the four items representing ME loaded onto another, and the correlation between the two factors was estimated. The factor loadings of the items were relatively high (see Table 3), and the fit of this model was adequate, $\chi^2(34) = 154.88$, GFI = .91, RMSEA = .08 [95% CI .07, .09], suggesting that the items did in fact separate into two factors. The two factors were significantly correlated ($r = .69$), but the fit of the model was significantly improved when the items were estimated as indicators of two underlying constructs rather than one, $\chi^2_{\text{difference}} = 121.51$, $p < .01$. Therefore, the use of these items to operationalize MA and ME as separate factors in the analyses was justified by the factor structure.

Within the context of a two-factor model, examination of the residual correlations revealed that ill fit was more of a problem for the last two items of the ME scale, both of which tap a willingness to participate in collective action to advance the desire to export values to others (i.e., giving time, money, and political support to causes that advance one's values on behalf of that person). Such a pattern could suggest that a slightly better fit would have been obtained had all the items focused on individual-level ME actions (i.e., personally talking to others), insofar as they might constitute a more proximal measure of ME tendencies. Collective action, on the other hand, might well be influenced by other unknown constructs, such as a general willingness to favor the institutional regulation of society. Overall, the evidence indicated that MA and ME are two distinct but correlated constructs.

Differences Among Religious Groups: Further Evidence of Scale Validity

While we pointed out in the introduction that religious groups should encourage greater ME behavior (as well as MA), it is also true that *certain* religious groups should be even more likely to export morality than others (i.e., more Evangelical sects). Given that this study was conducted in Utah, many participants were Mormons, a religious group that places a strong emphasis on missionary work and proselytizing. Thus, we conducted comparisons of (a) participants claiming a religious affiliation versus those not claiming an affiliation, and (b) Mormon participants versus participants claiming other religious affiliations. First, religious participants ($N = 395$, $M = 3.80$, $SD = .91$) were significantly higher on ME than were non-religious participants ($N = 149$, $M = 3.22$, $SD = .86$), $t(542) = 3.83$, $p < .01$. Furthermore, among the religious participants, those claiming membership in the Mormon religion ($N = 247$, $M = 3.99$, $SD = .87$) had significantly higher ME scores than did those claiming other affiliations ($N = 148$, $M = 3.49$, $SD = .89$), $t(393) = 5.44$, $p < .01$. Results were similar for MA, with religious participants ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.09$) scoring higher on MA than non-religious participants ($M = 2.10$, $SD = .84$), and Mormon participants ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.05$) scoring higher than other religious participants ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 1.02$), all $ts > 6.60$, $ps < .01$.[5]

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[5] In addition to ME and MA, Mormons also scored the highest on the other constructs in our model: conservatism (Mormons: $M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.18$; other religious: $M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.31$; $t(393) = 8.28$,

Mediation Tests and Path Analysis

The main objective of this study was to examine whether the results from the analyses of the GSS survey data could be conceptually replicated using more targeted measures of our theoretical constructs of interest. Specifically, first, we investigated whether conservatives would be more likely in general to endorse ME behaviors. Second, we investigated whether epistemic motivations in the moral domain (MA) can explain this phenomenon above and beyond the need for cognitive closure. We hypothesized that both NFC and MA would mediate the relationship between political conservatism and ME. We also sought to rule out potentially confounding demographic variables (i.e., age, gender, and monthly religious attendance) by including them as covariates in all analyses.

Table 4 displays the first-order correlations among the variables of interest including the moderate correlation between self-rated conservatism and ME ($r = .35$, $p < .01$). We began by estimating a regression equation to examine the direct effect of liberal–conservative self-placement on ME, controlling for demographic variables and NFC. The results of this analysis confirmed our first hypothesis, insofar as self-identified conservatives endorsed ME behaviors to a greater degree than did liberals, $b = .19$, $SE = .03$, $p < .01$, $PRE = .08$. In this model, NFC also significantly predicted ME, suggesting that a general epistemic drive toward unambiguous and firm answers can help to explain ME tendencies. However, given that the direct effect of conservatism remained moderately strong even when NFC was included in the model, we proceeded to test whether it would be mediated by MA while controlling for NFC.[6] Therefore, in the first step of constructing these mediation models—according to procedures outlined by Judd and Kenny (1981) and Baron and Kenny (1986)—MA was regressed onto conservatism in a model that included the demographic variables and NFC. This analysis revealed that conservatism significantly predicted MA, $b = .31$, $SE = .03$, $p < .01$, $PRE = .15$.

Next, to establish MA as a mediator of the relationship between conservatism and ME, we tested whether it significantly predicted ME over and above liberal–conservative self-placement, and whether the effects of conservatism on ME were

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Footnote 5 continued

p < .01) and NFC (Mormons: $M = 3.79$, $SD = .39$; other religious: $M = 3.69$, $SD = .46$; $t(393) = 2.16$, $p < .05$). Overall, religious participants were more conservative than non-religious participants, though there were no differences in NFC.

[6] As a covariate, NFC was a significant predictor of ME ($b = .37$, $SE = .09$, $PRE = .03$) and MA ($b = .63$, $SE = .10$, $PRE = .06$), controlling for age, sex, and monthly religious attendance. When testing a mediation model similar to that reported in the main results, NFC was a weak but significant mediator of the conservatism–ME relationship. In this model, conservatism significantly predicted NFC ($b = .09$, $SE = .01$, $p < .01$, $PRE = .08$), and NFC predicted greater ME over and above the effects of conservatism ($b = .20$, $SE = .09$, $p < .05$, $PRE = .01$). Although 18.5% of the direct effect of conservatism on ME was mediated in this model (Sobel $z = 2.06$, $p < .05$), more conservative identification continued to strongly predict ME, $b = .19$, $SE = .03$, $p < .01$, $PRE = .08$. The fact that MA strongly predicted ME even when controlling for NFC (with NFC becoming a nonsignificant predictor, $b = .07$, $SE = .08$, $p > .05$) suggests that MA is the more proximal construct here. It appears that while general epistemic concerns are associated with adopting an ME strategy in relation to others, this is fully accounted for by the more specific epistemic concerns within the moral domain (MA).

Table 4 First-order correlations between important variables and covariates in Study 2

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age	–	.05	.02	−.02	−.04	.09*
2. Religious attendance		–	.01	.19**	.23**	.22**
3. Need for closure			.82	.27**	.24**	.17**
4. Conservatism				–	.49**	.35**
5. Moral absolutism					.84	.51**
6. Moral exporting						.69

The coefficients reported for NFC, MA, and ME (in the diagonal) reflect internal reliability for these scales calculated as Cronbach's α

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$
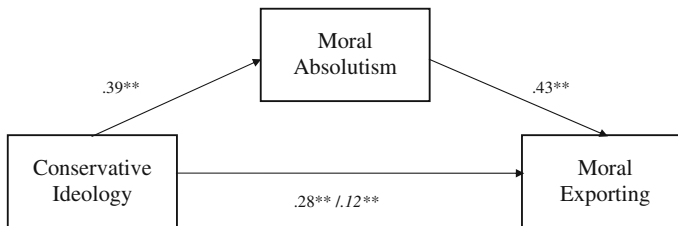
Fig. 1 Mediation of the relationship between conservatism and moral exporting by moral absolutism, controlling for sex, age, monthly religious attendance, and general need for closure (Study 2). The numbers in the path model refer to the standardized beta coefficients (see the Results section for the reported raw coefficients). The italicized value in the direct path reflects the predictive power of conservatism once MA has been included in the model. *Note*: ** $p < .01$

significantly diminished in such a model as compared to its direct effect in the previous model in which MA was omitted. If these two conditions are met, MA would at least partially explain why conservatives endorse ME behavior more than liberals. In this model, MA remained a very strong predictor of ME, $b = .39$, $SE = .04$, $p < .01$, $PRE = .19$. Although conservative ideology was still a significant predictor in this model ($b = .08$, $SE = .03$, $p < .01$, $PRE = .01$), MA mediated 82.96% of the direct effect, Sobel $z = 7.08$, $p < .01$ (see Fig. 1). These results reveal that MA is an important, albeit partial, mediator of the conservatism–ME relationship, and that it explains variance in this relationship that a more general (and amoral, purely epistemic) need for cognitive closure cannot.

Discussion

The results of Study 2 replicate and extend the earlier findings based on nationally representative GSS data. Once again, conservatives were found to endorse ME behaviors more than liberals, and this tendency was explained in part by conservatives being more likely to embrace MA. Moreover, compared to NFC, MA appears to serve as a more proximal mediator of the political conservatism–ME relationship. Thus, while conservatives generally have a higher NFC than liberals

(e.g., Jost et al., 2003), this manifests itself in the moral domain as MA, which accounts for a large portion of the relationship between conservatism and ME.

In addition to the replication and extension of the mediation effect, Study 2 also points to the distinct nature of ME vis à vis MA. While the two constructs are highly related, confirmatory factor analysis supported their treatment as two separable factors. Finally, additional evidence for the validity of the ME scale was obtained through comparison of the mean levels of religious and non-religious participants, as well as comparisons among specific religious affiliations. Most notably, Mormons, who are known for the strong emphasis they place on missionary work, tended to score the highest on our ME scale (as well as on MA).

General Discussion

In two studies and with respect to two widely different samples, we found support for the hypothesis that political conservatism would be associated with a willingness to endorse the belief that it is acceptable (and possibly even obligatory) to actively promote one's own personal moral values to others, a belief we have termed *moral exporting* (ME). We also found support for the idea that conservatives' stronger endorsement of ME is at least partly due to epistemic concerns, namely, political conservatives' tendencies to think of morality in absolute terms relative to political liberals (above and beyond a more general need for cognitive closure; Jost et al., 2003). This pattern of results was obtained for both university (Study 2) and nationally representative (Study 1) samples of participants. Study 2 also clarified that the link between moral epistemic absolutism and ME is independent of a more general need for cognitive closure.

The Case for a New Construct

In this research, we sought to establish the viability of a new construct, namely, *moral exporting*, starting with a single item in the General Social Survey and then testing a self-report scale that was constructed based on the proposed action-oriented nature of the phenomenon (i.e., proselytizing). Even so, it is worthwhile to more fully distinguish our construct from other related constructs that have been proposed and tested in previous research.

Moral Exporting and Moral Convictions

Establishing this new ME construct allowed for a test of whether people who carry strong moral convictions would be more likely to act in promotion or imposition of those beliefs (Skitka et al., 2005). In particular, the property of moral convictions that suggests they are experienced as universal fact (moral absolutism) predicted people's inclinations toward ME. This suggests that the assumed universality of moral conviction may be, in and of itself, a specific epistemic motivation to attain shared moral reality, and can encourage behavioral tendencies associated with ME. There is also evidence that ME serves as one possible release for MA (apart from

avoidance or derogation). Thus, while moral convictions are certainly part of ME, they seem to be conceptually closer to the idea of MA. Convictions, like an absolutist view on morality, appear to serve as the bridge between more general epistemic needs for certainty and closure (Kruglanski, 1990) and our ME construct.

Regardless of their similarity, it is important to distinguish our idea of MA from moral convictions in general. Moral convictions tend to be tied directly to specific attitudes (e.g., abortion; Skitka et al., 2005), whereas the idea of MA is inherently devoid of specific content and refers only to how moral convictions are perceived in terms of universal "right" and "wrong." In addition, moral convictions generally predict a greater desire for social distance from and unwillingness to collaborate with those who hold differing moral opinions (Skitka et al., 2005), a finding that is at odds with our MA–ME connection. Thus, although there is considerable overlap in the consequences of moral convictions and the concepts we have presented in this article, we argue that MA and the ME behavior that it tends to engender are theoretically distinct from specific issue-based moral convictions.

Moral Exporting and "Moralizing"

Also conceptually similar to ME is "moralizing" (Bennett & Shapiro, 2002; Janoff-Bulman & Sheikh, 2006), which refers to "the use of morality, and specifically to the overuse of morality and one's self-certainty in applying it" (Janoff-Bulman & Sheikh, 2006, p. 327). Similar to moral convictions, this construct also appears to resemble MA more than ME. When these researchers refer to the "application" of morality, they seem to mean the tendency to see more situations in which one's conception of morality can be applied, not the act of imposing it on other people. For example, moralizers tend to apply morality to behaviors that might be generally regarded as morally neutral—in other words, preferences are converted into moral values (e.g., Rozin, 1999). While this may leave one more susceptible to the interpersonal processes we describe, it does not explicitly involve a reciprocal action component. Moralizers make moral pronouncements, but they do not necessarily attempt to impose such pronouncements on others. In fact, Keenan (2002) states that the "moral code book…is not itself seen as open to interrogation or in need of argumentative defense" (p. 40). While this obviously involves a degree of MA (and potentially a more "grandstanding" type of moral belief), ME is, in a sense, based on such argumentative defense that moralizers seem to feel is unnecessary. Granted, ME, moralizing, and MA do share many common elements, but they appear to be distinct constructs, especially in regard to the action component of ME.

Moral Exporting and Moralistic Values

Another related phenomenon is exemplified by Baron's (2003) analysis of moralistic values. Moralistic values are values that individuals attempt to impose on others regardless of whether the targets are interested, or whether they would benefit from such values. This distinction between truly "moral" goals and those that are "moralistic" is important to consider, though the focus is more on the

content and motivation (and consequences for others) than the accompanying behavior per se. As we have emphasized, ME is an action-oriented strategy that is motivated to a great extent by epistemic concerns with certainty. Thus, while part of the motivation may be self-interested (reduction of moral uncertainty), this does not exclude the distinct possibility that moral exporters also have the interests of their targets in mind when they proselytize their values (i.e., "saving" others' "souls"). Baron defines moral goals as "goals concerning the behavior of others so as to achieve their goals as well as your own" (p. 1139), while moralistic goals are seen as independent of the others' goals. It seems clear that ME could involve a combination of these, though it is likely that many cases will involve purely moralistic aspects. Closer to our construct may be his idea of "paternalistic altruism"—in other words, engaging in ME may allow individuals to "help" others while also reducing epistemic uncertainty. This benevolence or paternalism suggests an important distinction between moral absolutists who choose ME as a strategy and those who choose derogation or avoidance, though in most cases it is likely that targets of ME will not be very accepting of such "help." This will be addressed further below.

Is Moral Exporting Uniformly Negative?

We suspect that some readers may walk away with the belief that ME is a uniformly negative and dangerous strategy that individuals cling to in the face of uncertainty. While our primary aim in this article has been descriptive in nature, it would be naïve to assume that research on value-laden topics (such as politics and moral beliefs) can ever take a completely value-free approach (Tetlock, 1994). Therefore, we believe it is worth discussing up-front some of the potential reasons for and against the use of ME. We reiterate that ME is one way in which people cope with uncertainty and threat in the moral domain, and similar to virtually all coping strategies, it is likely to incur both costs and benefits. We believe that the negative consequences that may result from ME (and MA more generally) are clear—to the extent that there exists irreconcilable disagreement in moral beliefs between groups, it is likely that the fire of intergroup conflict will continue to burn brightly.

On the other hand, there are reasons why holding absolutist and "exportable" moral beliefs may be a good thing. Besides quelling uncertainty that may arise in the moral domain, absolutist moral beliefs may help to facilitate social cohesion and coordinate joint action. It seems likely that respect for social institutions and other forms of social capital (i.e., paying taxes, abiding laws) are more likely to arise in societies in which everyone subscribes to the same basic moral framework (Haidt & Graham, 2009; Smith, 2003). Moreover, recent research suggests that altruistic deeds within the ingroup and hostility toward the outgroup may be two sides of the same co-evolved coin (Choi & Bowles, 2007; van Vugt, De Cremer, & Janssen, 2007), and it would be surprising if strong moral convictions did not play a role in this process. Examining both the positive and negative social implications of ME behavior is an issue that will need to be more clearly addressed by future research.

Indeed, other recent research (Peterson, 2008) suggests that ME is generally a less combative strategy than outright derogation or avoidance of others that moral

absolutists can potentially take. In other words, there seems to be at least two paths that can follow from MA: one involving avoidance and/or derogation of other groups that is associated with hostility, and another that involves a more benevolent confrontation with the beliefs of others that is actually associated with slightly positive attitudes toward others. However, this "benevolent" aspect of ME is actually quite paternalistic, in that these individuals assume their views are the best and that others need their "help." In addition, one could argue that ME is not necessarily the most adaptive strategy for an individual striving to reduce uncertainty, in that confronting others makes these differences of opinion more salient and is likely to lead to a high rate of rejection (i.e., the low success rate of most missionaries). However, such a strategy also involves a great deal of commitment to one's moral values, and the behaviors that are carried out in service of these values likely only serve to strengthen that commitment through self-justification and dissonance reduction processes (e.g., Festinger, Riecken, & Schachter, 1956; Tavris & Aronson, 2007), even in the face of skeptics.

Limitations and Future Directions

The above studies were designed as an initial first step in delineating some of the crucial features involved in ME. In addition to previous research relating conservative ideology to general epistemic motivations to achieve shared reality (NFC), we have suggested that it is also related to the specific manifestation of MA. In addition, the relationship between conservatism and ME tendencies can be accounted for by MA, even when its more general counterpart (NFC) is taken into account. While the exploratory nature of our studies has led us to conclude that there are important and measureable relationships among these constructs, there are obvious limitations in interpretation of the findings. Most importantly, because our studies were not experimental in design it is difficult to tease apart the causal relations among political ideology, epistemic motivation, and ME.

At this point, it is unclear whether it is something about the content of conservative beliefs that gives rise to these behaviors, or whether it is merely that people who are attracted to conservative ideology are also likely to be high in MA and ME. In order to address this concern, future research should examine how directly manipulating NFC or MA influences subsequent measures of ME. Given that past research has successfully employed manipulations of NFC (e.g., through manipulations of time pressure—see Chirumbolo, Livi, Mannetti, Pierro, & Kruglanski, 2004), the next clear step for research in this domain is to examine the causal relationships among these variables. Other situational threats to certainty and meaning (e.g., Greenberg et al., 1990; McGregor et al., 2001; van den Bos et al., 2007) may also be effectively employed to elicit ME-related behavior. Such an endeavor strikes us as part of a logical progression aimed at clarifying the psychological mechanisms underlying ME.

Another limitation of the current research is that only *reports* of behavior and behavioral intentions consistent with ME were assessed. There are, however, several reasons to believe that such reports would be especially strong predictors of actual ME behaviors. The ME scale presented here asks participants to answer directly in

the context of stable and strongly held moral convictions. Moreover, the scale measures attitudes that are formed on the basis of their own behavioral tendencies (i.e., voting decisions). A recent meta-analysis of the attitude-behavior relationship (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006) suggests that it is precisely under these conditions that attitudes and behavioral intentions are most predictive of future behavior. Nonetheless, because we believe ME is inherently action-oriented, it is important that future research also should examine the degree to which ME reports correspond to concrete behaviors in laboratory or field settings.

Related to this, it may also be useful for future research to explore the more implicit components of ME. While the set of studies presented here has allowed for the examination of the relationship among political identification, epistemic motivations, and ME, these constructs have all been measured explicitly through direct self-report. To the degree that social desirability interferes with explicit acknowledgment of these attitudes and behaviors, our study may not be the most accurate reflection of these relationships. However, in the context of paradigms that allow for less obtrusive measurement of these somewhat sensitive constructs, the relationships among them may stand out more clearly.

Finally, while ME does not necessarily *depend* on specific content of one's moral beliefs and convictions, it still may be associated with certain characteristics and dimensions of morality. For example, connections to the five foundations theory of morality (Haidt & Graham, 2007) may be theoretically useful for understanding the relation between ME and political conservatism, as Haidt and Graham (2007, 2009) have argued that conservatives emphasize several domains of morality beyond liberals (e.g., purity, ingroup loyalty, authority). This may relate to our finding in both studies that, despite the evidence that MA was a partial mediator of the conservatism–ME effect, conservatism remained a significant (though weak) predictor of ME beyond its shared variance with MA (and NFC). It may be that certain dimensions of morality are more "exportable" for conservatives, in addition to being better vehicles for epistemic certainty.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we believe that ME represents a useful new way of describing the tendency for some people to push their moral beliefs onto others. We began with an attempt to quantify this phenomenon and contextualized it in terms of epistemic motivations, interpersonal and intragroup processes, and political orientation. Doing so helped to deepen the understanding of ME as a behavioral tendency with a significant degree of predictable variation from person to person. It is thus somewhat clearer now that certain motivations and identities are positively associated with a desire to "market" one's own moral beliefs to others. The implications of ME for such varied domains as interpersonal interaction, group identity and influence, public policy, and intergroup relations suggest further avenues of empirical research. Our hope is that by addressing the "why" question related to ME, we are now closer to tackling questions of "how," "to what extent," "with whom," and "when."

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