

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

*theoretical foundations of
political psychology*

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POLITICAL psychology, at the most general level, is an application of what is known about human psychology to the study of politics. It draws upon theory and research on biopsychology, neuroscience, personality, psychopathology, evolutionary psychology, social psychology, developmental psychology, cognitive psychology, and intergroup relations. It addresses political elites—their personality, motives, beliefs, and leadership styles, and their judgments, decisions, and actions in domestic policy, foreign policy, international conflict, and conflict resolution. It also deals with the dynamics of mass political behavior: voting, collective action, the influence of political communications, political socialization and civic education, group-based political behavior, social justice, and the political incorporation of immigrants.

Since the publication of the first edition of the *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* in 2003, the field of political psychology has grown significantly. Research has been fueled by a mix of age-old questions and recent world events as social psychologists and political scientists have turned to psychology to understand the origins of political conservatism (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003), the historic election of an African American president in the United States (Tesler & Sears, 2010), spectacular acts of international terrorism such as the 2004 Madrid and the 2005 London train bombings and the September 11 attacks in the United States (Crenshaw, 2000; Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003; Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2003), anti-immigrant sentiment (Sniderman, Hagendoorn, & Prior, 2004; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007), the failure of expert judgment (Tetlock, 2005), and the underpinnings of collective action (Simon & Klandermans, 2001).

Enlivened interest in the topics addressed by political psychologists goes hand in hand with a strong and increasingly global organization, the International Society of

Political Psychology (ISPP), and the growing circulation of *Political Psychology*, its well-respected journal. The journal has grown in stature in recent years. It ranked 12th in political science and 19th in social psychology in terms of its two-year impact factor in the 2011 Journal Citation Reports database, and was ranked even more highly in terms of its five-year impact (9th in political science and 14th in social psychology in 2011). There are also vibrant political psychology sections of major national and regional organizations such as the organized section of the American Political Science Association (APSA) and the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) Standing Group.

There is also an increased number of textbooks devoted to the field. Since the first version of this *Handbook* several good undergraduate texts devoted solely to political psychology have been published, including textbooks by Cottam, Dietz-Uhler, Mastors, and Preston (2010), Houghton (2009), Marcus (2012), a reader by Jost and Sidanius (2004), and a graduate-level text by McDermott (2004) on political psychology and international relations. Several major presses, including Cambridge, Oxford, and Routledge, now have book series in political psychology. There is also a steady stream of monographs published in the field each year, leading to the existence of three annual book prizes dedicated to political psychology: the Robert E. Lane book prize awarded by the Political Psychology Section of the American Political Science Association, and the Alexander George and David O. Sears prizes awarded by the International Society for Political Psychology.

The current edition of the *Handbook* takes stock of the past decade's developments in political psychology, building closely on the 2003 *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (Sears, Huddy, & Jervis, 2003), and more loosely on two previous volumes: *Handbook of Political Psychology* (Knutson, 1973) and *Political Psychology* (Hermann, 1986). In this second edition of the *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* widely respected political scientists and psychologists summarize what psychology has contributed to our understanding of the political behavior of both political elites and ordinary citizens, and the insights into basic psychology obtained from research on political behavior. The chapters in the *Handbook* provide an overview of key terms, major theories, and cutting-edge research within both psychology and political science and will be an essential reference for scholars and students interested in the intersection of these two fields.

We designed the *Handbook* to provide a comprehensive and expertly distilled account of research in many subfields of political psychology for both the beginning graduate student and the more advanced scholar who may be new to a specific subfield or topic. But we should note that the original *Handbook* will remain a useful reference because it contains topics and discussions that are omitted from the current volume. Moreover, political psychology is a diverse and growing subfield and by necessity not all topics could be included in a single volume. We thought long and hard about a number of chapters that did not make it into this volume, including neuropolitics, the political psychology of terrorism, political impression formation, and the political psychology of obedience. These topics are touched on within different chapters but may constitute distinct chapters in a future edition of the *Handbook*.

In compiling this volume, we acknowledge the growing international flavor of contemporary political psychology, which explores topics as diverse as the dynamics of

American presidential elections, resistance to immigration in a globalized economy, and the role of emotion and threat in the decisions of political leaders. Where possible, authors of chapters in this volume have chosen examples of good political psychology research from around the globe, demonstrating the broad explanatory power of common psychological forces within different polities. Cognitive biases, authoritarianism, patriotism, ethnocentrism, and social conformity are not constrained by geographic boundaries but seem evident throughout the world, albeit in interaction with specific cultures and political systems.

1. WHAT IS POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY?

At its core, political psychology concerns the behavior of individuals within a specific political system. Psychology alone cannot explain the Holocaust, intractable conflicts, war, or most other behavior of states or collective political actors in complex environments. Individuals do not act within a vacuum. Their behavior varies with, and responds to, differences in political institutions, political cultures, leadership styles, and social norms. As Levy notes in his chapter in this volume, psychology influences foreign policy behavior primarily through its interaction with specific aspects of the international system, national governments, and distinct societies. The same logic applies to a wide range of different phenomena. Consider research on authoritarianism. Do we look to the behavior of leaders or their followers to understand why citizens in the 1930s and 1940s followed fascist leaders who persecuted and killed millions of people? Were the atrocities committed in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia a function of political leadership, the support (acquiescence) of the public, or both? Some scholars attribute the Holocaust squarely to the psychology of authoritarian followers (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950); others view it as a function of leadership and the pervasive human propensity to obey authority (Milgram, 1974); still others view it as the reaction of authoritarian individuals to social and political discord (Feldman & Stenner, 1997). In the end it is difficult to believe that someone with authoritarian tendencies will behave in exactly the same way under a fascist regime as in a liberal democracy.

A complex mix of individual psychology and political context also shapes public reactions to terrorism. Public support for anti-terrorism policies depends on how a threatened government reacts, the government's perceived competence and effectiveness in combatting terrorism, and a person's felt vulnerability to a future terrorist event. External forces such as the strength of government national security policy or terrorist determination and capabilities vary over time and across contexts, and they influence, in turn, whether a citizen feels anxious or angry in response to a terrorist event. Powerful terrorists and a weak government tend to generate anxiety among a threatened population, whereas a powerful government and weak terrorists will likely generate feelings of anger. Moreover, not everyone responds to threat in the

same way, and individual psychological dispositions play an added role in determining whether someone reacts to terrorism with anger or anxiety. In general, a society dominated by feelings of anger may support aggressive antiterrorism action, whereas a population dominated by feelings of anxiety may oppose aggressive action that exacerbates the risk of terrorism (Huddy & Feldman, 2011; Lambert et al., 2010). Neither individual psychology nor political circumstances alone is likely to fully explain these reactions.

In a more general sense, questions about public reactions to terrorism or an authoritarian response to fascist rule are closely linked to one of the perennial questions raised by political psychology: how well are citizens equipped to handle their democratic responsibilities (Le Cheminant & Parrish, 2011)? Can they deliberate over the issues of the day fairly to arrive at a reasoned judgment, or conversely do they succumb to internecine enmities and fall victim to irrational intolerance? Many of the chapters in this *Handbook* grapple with such issues, underscoring the democratic capabilities of the citizenry while highlighting ways in which leaders and citizens fall short of the democratic ideal. The question of a citizenry's democratic competence is addressed very directly in the chapter by Myers and Mendelberg as they consider the psychology of political deliberation and the conditions under which it conforms to the democratic ideal of free, equal, and open dialogue. In reality, both citizens and leaders exhibit distorted reasoning and a slew of cognitive and emotional biases that are well cataloged in this volume. Partisan resistance to new information, ethnocentric reactions to immigrants, automatic and preconscious reactions to a political candidate's facial features, greater risk-taking in the face of losses than gains—the list goes on. Many of these same processes are at work among political leaders for whom partisan loyalties loom large, threat impairs their ability to deliberate rationally, and emotions such as humiliation and anger affect their political decisions. In that sense leaders are vulnerable to emotional and cognitive psychological biases similar to those observed within the electorate.

Yet democratic societies work, more or less, and political psychology has focused in recent years on individual differences among citizens to explain why a characterization of the public as biased, ethnocentric, fearful, or any other singular characterization is erroneous. Individual differences grounded in early socialization, genetic makeup, social context, and personality generate liberals and conservatives, Social Democrats and Christian Democrats, tolerant and intolerant individuals, more and less well informed citizens, and sectarian partisan elites. Politics emerges from such individual differences, leading to political disagreements that are visible and widely debated within well-functioning democratic societies. Even if citizens engage in biased reasoning, competing arguments are pervasive and difficult to avoid completely; the passionate are free to make their case, and the dispassionate can evaluate their efforts and arguments. The democratic process may be messy, unsatisfying, and frustrating, but it is inherently psychological. As scholars we need to know something about both a political system *and* human psychology to make sense of it. The interplay of psychology and politics, especially within democratic processes, is a central theme of this volume and lies at the core of many of its chapters.

2. INTELLECTUAL UNDERPINNINGS OF POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

As we noted in the earlier edition of this *Handbook*, there is no one political psychology (Sears et al., 2003). Rather, researchers have employed a number of different psychological theories to study political behavior and attitudes. Some theories are more appropriate than others for analyzing certain political phenomena, as seen in many of the chapters in the *Handbook*. For example, in contemporary political psychology Freudian psychodynamics is commonly applied to questions concerning the psychology of political leaders, and discourse theory is applied specifically to the analysis of political rhetoric and communications. But some of the psychological approaches employed across these chapters are marshaled to understand diverse political phenomena. For example, the influence of cognitive and emotional processes on elite and citizen decision-making is discussed in a number of chapters. Basic aspects of the affective and cognitive system such as the link between anger and risk seeking or the limits of working memory and attention have broad ramifications for the study of political behavior across diverse political topics. To deepen insight into the intellectual underpinnings of political psychology, we lay out the major classes of psychological theories that have been applied to the study of political behavior (see also Cottam et al., 2010; Marcus, 2012; Sullivan, Rahn, & Rudolph, 2002). Each of the broad approaches we discuss contains several different theories and concepts yet are brought together by their focus on broadly similar psychological processes and mechanisms.

2.1. Rational Choice

Over the last five to six decades, rational choice theory has been a major influence on political science models of both elite and mass political behavior. This is understandable since democratic theory is predicated on the notion of a well-informed citizenry capable of handling and digesting information on issues of the day to arrive at well-informed decisions. As Chong explains in this *Handbook*, rational choice theory is built on a set of basic assumptions about human behavior that resemble the requirements for a well-functioning citizenry: first, individuals have consistent preferences over their goals, which are often defined as the pursuit of economic self-interest; second, individuals assign a value or utility to these goals; and third, probabilities are assigned to the different ways of achieving such goals. This culminates in Chong's definition of rational choice as "choosing the course of action that maximizes one's expected utility." If utilities, or goals, are equated with economic self-interest, as they often are, a rational choice model predicts that an individual will be motivated to act in ways that are most likely to pay the highest financial dividend. In politics, this translates into support of candidates and policies that are most likely to improve voters' economic bottom line

and benefit them personally. Expectancy-value theory was formalized in psychology as an early version of the rational choice idea (Edwards, 1954; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

As Chong notes in this *Handbook*, however, pure rationality is something of a fiction when applied to human behavior. Downs (1957) was the first to identify the paradox of voting, a major problem for rational choice theory, in which the costs of voting far exceed its expected benefit to one's self-interest, suggesting that it is irrational even though frequently practiced (see also Green & Shapiro, 1994). Since Downs, it has become increasingly clear that neither leaders nor citizens make entirely rational political decisions. Nonetheless, in many branches of political science, researchers are only slowly moving away from a rational model of human behavior. At the forefront of this effort lies pioneering research by social psychologists on systematic biases in human decision-making (Kahneman, 2011; Kahneman, Slovic, & Tversky, 1982).

In the *Handbook*, Stein provides a succinct account of a rationalist approach to threat in the field of international relations and highlights its inadequacy to fully explain elite behavior and decision-making. She documents a number of cognitive, motivational, and emotional biases that distort elite threat perceptions and reactions to threat. Herrmann attributes elites' images of other nations, in part, to similar cognitive and emotional biases; these images shape, in turn, elite responses to the actions and perceived intentions of other nations in which friend and foe are clearly distinguished. Levy develops this theme further and summarizes prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) as an alternative to rationalist expected utility as a theory of choice under conditions of risk. In something of an exception, however, Dyson and 't Hart caution against an excessive focus on cognitive and emotional biases among elite decision-makers and argue instead for a more pragmatic view of rationality, which they define as the best decision possible under current resource constraints.

At the level of mass politics, among the earliest challenges to rational choice were observations that major political attitudes were in place well before adults began contemplating the political arena, in studies of political socialization and voting behavior (see the chapter by Sears and Brown). Later challenges came from Kahneman and Tversky's findings on cognitive heuristics and biases, which blossomed into the subfield of behavioral decision theory and behavioral economics (Camerer, Loewenstein, & Rabin, 2004), fields that intersect quite closely with political psychology. Behavioral economics and other well-documented psychologically based deviations from rationality are discussed at some length in the chapter by Redlawsk and Lau on citizen political decision-making. Tyler and van der Toorn also note in their chapter that justice considerations often lead citizens to make political decisions that are at odds with their rational self-interest.

In conclusion, it is difficult to overstate the importance of rational choice theory as a foundational basis for democratic theory and a stimulus to political psychology research. Its emphasis on the structure of information, careful deliberation, and weighting of one's interests as essential to the formation of informed positions on political matters continues to serve as a baseline for much political psychology research. Rational choice theory may provoke political psychologists to document the ways in which

human behavior fails to conform with its stringent expectations, but even in that role it is highly influential. Moreover, even to political psychologists the public's democratic shortcomings are cause for consternation no matter how well explained psychologically, suggesting some lingering desire for the normative standard of rational deliberation and well-informed political decisions.

2.2. Biopolitics

Over the last decade or so, social scientists have begun to view human behavior through the prism of biology with intriguing results: neuroscience sheds light on information processing and emotion, evolutionary psychology underscores the biologically adaptive role of various social behaviors, and behavioral genetics uncovers the heritability of many social and political behaviors (Hatemi & McDermott, 2011). Political psychology is also beginning to adopt this perspective, leading to a key focus on biological reasoning and evidence in several chapters in the volume, and a passing reference to biological evidence in many others.

At one level an explanation of human behavior grounded in evolutionary thinking seems entirely consistent with a focus on rationality since human behavior is functional within evolutionary theory, geared toward enhanced reproductive fitness via the process of natural selection. In the *Handbook*, Sidanius and Kurzban outline the basic principles of evolutionary psychology, examining the adaptive biological and reproductive benefits of many social and political behaviors, including cooperation and coordination. But whereas classic rational choice theory is focused on individual goal seeking and reward, evolutionary psychology grapples increasingly with the benefits of social and political behavior to the collective linked to the controversial theory of group selection (Wilson & Wilson, 2008). In that vein, Sidanius and Kurzban state succinctly and somewhat provocatively that "adaptations for political psychology are driven by the possibility of fitness gains through coordinated, cooperative activity with conspecifics." Such deviations from individual rationality are of central interest to political psychology.

Evolutionary psychology focuses on attributes of psychology common to all members of the species, but some questions tackled by biopolitics deal with marked individual variation in human behavior. Why are some people open to experience and others closed, or some conscientious and others not? In her chapter, Funk picks up where Sidanius and Kurzban leave off, providing an overview of major approaches to the study of genetic influences on political behavior that explain individual differences. She evaluates the degree to which different facets of political behavior can be traced back to genes and concludes that genes have extensive influence on political behavior, with heritability shaping a range of fundamental political orientations and behaviors, including political ideology, partisan identity, strength of partisanship, and political participation. This work raises many intriguing questions about the biological mechanisms through which

genes influence political behavior, and Funk notes a number of studies in which political behavior is traced to specific genetic alleles that govern known biological processes.

Other chapter authors allude in passing to the growing field of biopolitics. Brader and Marcus discuss developments in the neural understanding of emotions, and Stein considers similar research in reference to the perception of threat among political elites. Huddy notes biological evidence in support of the primacy of in-group attachments, the speed with which in-group and out-group distinctions form in the brain, and the power of hormones such as oxytocin to generate positive in-group feelings. Kinder considers the possible genetic bases of racial prejudice. Dyson and 't Hart note research in which loss activates fear centers of the brain, helping to uncover the biological bases of loss aversion. Attention to the biological bases of political behavior will hopefully reinforce existing insights into political behavior, and help to identify basic biological pathways that may be central to an understanding of political psychology.

2.3. Personality and Psychodynamics

Many political psychologists have examined an individual's personality or characterological predispositions to explain the behavior of political leaders and the ideological choices of citizens. Personality is usually defined as a collection of relatively persistent individual differences that transcend specific situations and contribute to the observed stability of attitudes and behavior. In the last 10 years, political psychologists have shown renewed interest in stable personality traits and their effects on political attitudes and behavior based, in part, on growing consensus on the basic structure of personality traits.

Psychologists commonly identify five basic clusters of personality characteristics or traits—neuroticism, openness to experience, extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness—commonly referred to as the five-factor or Big Five framework of personality. These dimensions are described in some detail and their links to political ideology examined in the *Handbook* by Caprara and Vecchione. The five-factor model has broad influence in political psychology and is touched on in *Handbook* chapters by Feldman, Funk, Taber and Young, Huckfeldt, and colleagues, and Winter. Caprara and Vecchione go beyond conventional accounts of personality within political psychology, however, to suggest that personality is broader than just traits and incorporates political values, such as egalitarianism and the need for security. These basic political values explain individual differences in political attitudes to an impressive degree, as discussed in the chapter on ideology by Feldman. Winter takes a similarly broad view of personality in his chapter on political elites, drawing on social context, personality traits, cognitions, and motives to analyze individual differences in elite behavior and decision-making.

Sigmund Freud had a great deal of influence on early political psychologists because his psychoanalysis of specific individuals lent itself well to the analysis of the personalities of specific political leaders. Harold Lasswell, in his *Psychopathology of Politics* (1930),

was a pioneer in analyzing the personalities of political activists in terms of the unconscious conflicts that motivated their political activities. This approach led to numerous psychobiographies of famous leaders, such as the analysis of Woodrow Wilson by George & George (1956), or of Martin Luther by Erik Erikson (1958). Post employs an idiographic approach to perceptively analyze the personality of political leaders from a psychoanalytic perspective. This idiographic approach to personality and politics can be contrasted with the nomothetic approach discussed by Carprara and Vecchione, which statistically places large numbers of people at various positions on specific dimensions of personality.

Feldman adds an important caveat to the study of personality and politics, underscoring the critical interplay between personality traits and political systems. As he notes, political ideology is not simply a proxy for personality. Conservatives may be less open to experience than liberals, but how personality traits map onto political ideology within a given political system also depends on the structure of political parties, their number, strategically adopted issue positions, and additional religious-secular, racial, and other powerful cleavages within a society. In the end, personality is an important recent addition to the study of political psychology, but it cannot be considered in isolation from political context.

2.4. Cognitive and Affective Psychology

Cognitive psychology and neuroscience have had profound influence on political psychology through their discovery of key features of the cognitive system: limited attention and working memory, implicit attitudes that lie outside conscious awareness, the rapid formation of habitual mental associations, and the interplay of affect and cognition. In essence, the cognitive system is highly efficient, processing a great deal of information with relatively little mental exertion. Under appropriate conditions, individuals can override the human tendency toward fast and efficient decision-making (Kahneman, 2011). But political decision-making is often beset with biases that privilege habitual thought and consistency over the careful consideration of new information. This is not always bad. Indeed, in the realm of consumer and other choices such fast gut-level decisions are often superior to reasoned thought. But in the realm of politics, reliance on this form of reasoning privileges consistency through the process of motivated reasoning in which disagreeable or challenging information is quickly rejected. This can lead, in turn, to biased and suboptimal political decisions (Bartels, 1996).

In myriad ways, cognitive psychology has undermined the rational choice model of elite and public decision-making, and we briefly describe how awareness of each aspect of the cognitive system has shaped the study of political psychology over the last decade. Much of this research is dedicated toward understanding how well (or poorly) democratic citizens function and the degree to which they deviate from the normative ideal of rational decision-making.

2.4.1. *Cognitive Economy*

Clear limits on human information-processing capacity underlie the widespread use of cognitive heuristics or shortcuts, which can distort the decision-making of elites (Jervis, 1976; Larson, 1985) and members of the public. These limits often lead to what Simon (1957) refers to as "bounded rationality," discussed at some length in the *Handbook* chapter by Chong.

Levy discusses the impact of cognitive biases on foreign policy decision-making. He distinguishes between "cold," cognitive biases and "hot," affective biases. Cold biases are based on the application of straight cognitive heuristics such as anchoring, in which prior probability assessments exert a disproportionate weight and in which the updating of priors based on new information is slow and inefficient. Hot motivated biases, such as wishful thinking and cognitive consistency, help to preserve the integrity of one's belief system. Such biases in adulthood force an examination of the origins of attitudes and beliefs that require such vigorous defense, as developed in the chapter on childhood and adult development by Sears and Brown. Elite reliance on efficient cognitive biases is further developed in the chapter by Herrmann, in which he discusses the underpinnings of enemy images held by one nation's leaders of another.

Redlawsk and Lau turn to the use of cognitive heuristics among citizens and review work on behavioral decision theory, contrasting normative models with behavioral descriptions of how ordinary people make political decisions. Here too the cognitive limits on rationality lead to a variety of problem-solving strategies that involve cognitive shortcuts. The use of mental shortcuts is not necessarily pernicious, however. The chapters by Taber and Young and by Redlawsk and Lau suggest that the use of cognitive shortcuts for reasoned political deliberation may not be as bad for mass political decision-making as once feared (also see Lau & Redlawsk, 1997). Dyson and 't Hart make a similar point, underscoring the benefits of heuristic reasoning for elite decision-makers facing a crisis.

The need for cognitive efficiency and an awareness of the low priority of politics for many citizens leads to a particular focus within political psychology on information: citizens' depth of knowledge, how political information is acquired, and the sources to which citizens turn to acquire it. In the *Handbook*, Valentino & Nardis discusses Americans' relatively low levels of political knowledge. Huckfeldt, Mondak and colleagues explore in considerable detail the role of everyday conversation partners in conveying political information (and influence). They specifically discuss the role played by politically expert discussion partners and find that conversation with such knowledgeable individuals is reasonably common and influential, even if their arguments are not necessarily held in high regard. This provides an example of how citizens can reduce the effort involved in acquiring knowledge by obtaining political information from others within their immediate social circles.

2.4.2. *Implicit Attitudes and Automaticity*

Conscious cognitive activity is a limited commodity, and decisions are often made, and opinions influenced, by information outside conscious awareness. In reality, the brain is largely devoted to monitoring the body, and most of its activity lies outside consciousness, reserving conscious thought for important higher-level activities. Political psychologists might regard political decisions as a high-level activity warranting conscious deliberation, yet political attitudes can be influenced by information of which someone may be unaware. Taber and Young discuss this phenomenon most fully in their chapter, focusing on implicit attitudes that exist outside conscious awareness, and the automaticity of preconscious attitude activation. They characterize implicit attitudes as affective in nature, fast to take effect, and as interacting with explicit attitudes in various ways that deserve further research scrutiny. Several chapters discuss the widely used Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). Kinder extends this discussion to implicit racial attitudes, examining their nature and political effects. In their chapter, Al Ramiah and Hewstone note the influence of implicit attitudes on intergroup discrimination, including racially discriminatory behavior. Overall, the political influence of implicit attitudes and automaticity has been examined in a growing number of research studies concerned with racial attitudes, candidate choice, and the effects of political campaign ads.

Valentino and Nardis weave a discussion of preconscious attitudes into their chapter on political communication, in which they assesses the power of campaign ads, news media content, and other media coverage to sway the public. They regard preconscious attitudes as a source of consistency in political belief, concluding that "what we think of as political deliberation is mostly the post-hoc rationalization of pre-conscious evaluations." In other words, preconscious attitudes serve as attitudinal ballast that prevents someone from being readily persuaded by any one political message; in essence, contrary information is coded as disagreeable and rejected even before it is consciously considered. In that sense, preconscious attitude activation serves as a useful counterweight to persuasive political rhetoric.

The notion of automaticity shares an intellectual link with behaviorist theories that were much in vogue in the middle half of the 20th century. One version of behaviorist theories emphasizes the learning of long-lasting habits, which in turn guide later behavior. They were inspired by the classical conditioning studies of Pavlov, who showed that dogs could be conditioned to salivate at the sound of a bell if it were always followed by food; by the instrumental conditioning studies of Watson and Skinner, who showed that animals could develop complex habits if their behavior proved instrumental to the satisfaction of their basic needs such as hunger or thirst; and the imitative learning examined by Bandura, who showed that children would engage in imitative behavior without any involvement of need satisfaction. Such theories long dominated the analysis of mass political attitudes. The field of political socialization, as described in the chapter by Sears

and Brown, developed from the assumption that children learned basic political attitudes (such as party identification and racial prejudice) from their families and friends, and that the residues of these early attitudes dominated their later political attitudes in adulthood, such as their presidential vote preferences, triggering a host of automatic associations not readily subject to conscious scrutiny.

2.4.3. *Spreading Activation and Habitual Association*

The process of automaticity is linked to the axiomatic notion, developed by Hebb (1949), that neurons that fire together, wire together. The simultaneous pairing of two objects in the environment leads to the firing of their relevant neurons. If this pairing persists, the brain associates the two objects habitually and recalls the second when primed with the first in a process of spreading activation. For example, if the word *liberal* is frequently associated in popular conversation with loose-living, pot-smoking, intellectual, or impractical dreamers, or the media depict African Americans in settings that emphasize their poverty, unemployment, and drug-related crimes, the terms will become connected mentally. This set of mental associations may lie at the heart of implicit racial, gender, and other group stereotypes discussed in the *Handbook* by Donald Kinder.

The existence of habitual associations in the brain results in consistent thought patterns that link, for example, abortion and liberal-conservative ideology, or positive feelings about capitalism and support for government fiscal austerity measures. In general, such associations anchor policy positions and contribute to attitude stability over time, especially among those who connect policies to stable political attitudes such as political ideology or other basic values. But habitual mental associations also vary among individuals; political sophisticates with strongly anchored political beliefs show stronger habitual mental associations than those with few or weakly held beliefs. The existence of consistent mental associations helps to explain why reframing a political issue—discussing a tax cut in terms of reduced government waste rather than growing inequality, for example—will be effective for citizens for whom the concept of a tax cut is not anchored by other stable political beliefs, but will be less successful among political sophisticates.

Understanding the factors or situations in which someone will scrutinize their habitual mental associations is of critical interest to political psychology and the study of a democratic citizenry more generally. In their *Handbook* chapter on political emotion, Brader and Marcus present evidence that habitual thought is less common when individuals feel anxious. Under those circumstances, citizens seek out new information, process it carefully, and are motivated to reach the “right” decision. The distinction between more and less effortful information processing is captured within dual-process models that posit both a superficial and more deliberate path to attitude change. The delineation of conditions under which citizens engage in careful political deliberation and are open to new information remains of key interest to political psychologists and will continue to stimulate research in both psychology and political science.

2.4.4. *Interplay of Affect and Cognition*

Contemporary political psychology draws heavily on affective processes. The previous volume of the *Handbook* was published at a time when individual information-processing and research on cognitive biases were popular topics within the study of political behavior. In the last decade, research on affect and emotion has increased exponentially in the social sciences, leading to a far more emotional and affect-laden view of political behavior that is manifestly apparent in the current volume. There was one chapter devoted to political emotions in the previous version of the *Handbook*, but few other chapters devoted much space to the topic. That has changed dramatically in the current volume, in which it is difficult to find a chapter that does not make at least passing reference to the role of political emotions in research on citizens or political elites.

In addition to Brader and Marcus's detailed discussion of political emotions, emotions surface in numerous ways in this edition of the *Handbook*. Stein discusses in considerable detail the influence of emotions on elites' perceptions of, and responses to, external threats. She builds on Brader and Marcus's discussion of the origins and cognitive consequences of different classes of emotions to explain the likely consequences of fear, humiliation, and anger for elite decision-making. Levy, Herrmann, and Dyson and 't Hart also touch on the role of emotion within elite decision-making. Positive and negative affect are integral components of implicit attitudes, as noted by Taber and Young, and in that sense emotion plays a very central role within modern attitude research in both psychology and political science. Al Ramiah and Hewstone consider evidence that members of minority groups react more strongly to negative implicit than explicit attitudes held by a majority group member, underscoring the power of implicit attitudes to shape interpersonal encounters. Kinder discusses the importance of affect to the study of racial prejudice. Huddy underscores the contribution of intergroup emotions to the development of group cohesion and political action. Bar-Tal and Halperan evaluate the importance of anger, hatred, fear, and humiliation to the development of intractable conflicts.

Brader and Marcus review research on political emotions in considerable detail. Their chapter underscores a fourth crucial aspect of the cognitive system, the intricate interplay between affect and cognition. Hot cognition underscores the degree to which motivational and affective states influence decision-making, and is discussed at some length by Taber and Young. Motivated reasoning serves as a pervasive example of hot cognition in which individuals are motivated to preserve their beliefs, oppose challenging or contradictory views, and dismiss the other side's arguments as far weaker than one's own. In essence, it produces rapid (and perhaps preconscious) dismissal of opposing views. The existence of motivated reasoning generates a paradox, however, when it comes to political sophisticates, who turn out to be most subject to automaticity and motivated reasoning. In Chong's words, "the beliefs of the best informed may reflect an ideologically distorted perspective rather than the objective state of the world," raising real questions about the rational basis of public opinion. If those with the information needed to make

a fully informed decision are also the most biased in their reasoning, rational deliberation seems like an unattainable political ideal.

2.5. Intergroup Relations

In tandem with a growing interest in biology and emotions, contemporary political psychology is also increasingly focused on collective behavior and theories of intergroup relations as explanations for political behavior. The previous version of this *Handbook* contained four chapters linked to intergroup relations focusing on in-group identity, collective action, group prejudice, and intractable group conflict. In the current volume, the chapters explicitly devoted to intergroup relations have been expanded to additionally include conflict management, interpersonal social influence, small-group deliberation, immigration and multiculturalism, and discrimination. Moreover, the growing focus over the last 10 years on group-based political behavior is entwined with other changes that have occurred within the field of political psychology. Intergroup research is increasingly international in focus, drawing on common frameworks such as social identity theory to explain political behavior in numerous regions of the world. It also builds on an integrated model of affect and cognition, with affect playing an especially important role in motivating collective action and driving responses to societal and personal threat.

The field of intergroup relations does not embody a single theoretical approach; rather it draws on diverse psychological theories. But it is fair to say that many, if not most, analyses of collective behavior deviate from a rational choice account of human behavior. For instance, Sidanius and Kurzban note the power of collectives within human evolution and conclude that the need to cooperate is a basic and functional aspect of human society (even if not always completely rational for an individual). Early research on intergroup relations, conducted in the 1950s and 1960s, stressed the biased and emotional nature of out-group animosity, especially toward Jews and Negroes (Allport, 1954). Much attention was paid to the childhood socialization of prejudice and stereotyping, as indicated in the chapter by Sears and Brown. Research on the authoritarian personality, a highly influential study of prejudice, emphasized the importance of interrelated and emotionally motivated aspects of personality such as authoritarian submission and authoritarian aggression in the development of racial prejudice and anti-Semitism (Adorno et al., 1950).

More recent research on racial prejudice and intergroup relations has drawn on a mix of cognitive and affective factors to account for political group conflict, cohesion, and conformity. The limitations of the cognitive system, as discussed in numerous chapters of the *Handbook*, lead to the formation of simplistic group stereotypes that shape intergroup political behavior, as noted by Kinder, influence enemy images, as discussed by Herrmann, and affect the process of conflict resolution, as described by Fisher and colleagues. Group identities are linked to powerful emotions that generate anger and hatred and play a central role in accounts of international and domestic politics in

Handbook chapters by Stein, Huddy, Klandermans and van Stekelenburg, and Bar-Tal and Halperan.

Some accounts of intergroup behavior, such as realistic conflict theory, are consistent with rational choice and are often pitted against symbolic accounts of group political cohesion and conflict. Huddy highlights the distinction between social identity theory, which stresses social prestige and intergroup respect as motives for intergroup behavior (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and realistic interest theories, which place emphasis on shared material interests and conflict over tangible resources (Blumer, 1958; Bobo & Tuan, 2006; Levine & Campbell, 1972; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). A similar distinction between realistic and affective responses to members of an out-group surfaces in research on racial attitudes in Kinder's discussion of prejudice and Green and Staerklé's chapter on immigration and multiculturalism. On balance, there is greater support for symbolic than realistic sources of political group cohesion and conflict.

Threat plays a special role in the political life of a collective. It can galvanize and unify an in-group while leading to vilification of an out-group, and is thus particularly potent politically. Threat is widely discussed in *Handbook* chapters dealing with the political psychology of mass politics, including Huddy's chapter on in-group identities, Green and Staerklé's consideration of immigration and multiculturalism, Kinder's overview of racial prejudice, and Bar-Tal and Halperan's overview of intractable conflicts. The concept of threat has long dominated research on conflict within international relations, as noted at some length by Stein. Research on both mass and elite politics assesses the rationality of threat reactions and generally rejects that interpretation, at least in broad stroke. Highly distorted subjective judgments often influence elites' perception of threat, as noted in chapters by Levy, Stein, and Herrmann. Moreover, economic threats are typically less politically potent than cultural and other less tangible noneconomic threats in mass politics, as discussed in chapters by Huddy, Kinder, and Green and Staerklé.

Finally, humans' impressive capacity for cooperation, a topic discussed at length by Sidanius and Kurzban, leads us back to consider the political psychology of a collective. Tyler and van der Toorn consider the origins of societal justice in social and moral values that can govern cooperation and societal defection. They mention a provocative argument advanced by social psychologist Donald Campbell that values such as humanitarianism have arisen over time through social evolution as a way to curb more base instincts linked to self-interest. This raises an important consideration about the key role of social norms in political psychology. As social animals, humans are profoundly affected by social norms. Those norms are often learned early and well in the socialization process, as indicated by Sears and Brown. Such norms hold the potential for good as well as evil. Indeed some even argue that life in modern democratic societies is remarkably peaceable, that international violence is now at an all-time low, and that the horrors that were commonplace in the past, such as the widespread use of torture, are now widely condemned (Pinker, 2011). The globalization of economic life reflects international cooperation on a scale unimaginable in times past.

Have the scales tipped toward a more humane and cooperative world? Such a claim would undoubtedly be disputed by scholars of indigenous oppression, economic

inequality, and other societal ills. Nonetheless, research on values and social justice opens political psychology to the positive forces of cooperation, tolerance, and respect on which modern democratic societies pivot. Adherence to a norm of cooperation may not be rational for an individual (if defined as the pursuit of self-interest) but can have clear advantages to human groups. The positive forces in human society are touched on only lightly in this *Handbook* but may come to play a larger role in future political psychology research (see Aspinwall & Satudinger, 2002; Monroe, 1996).

3. ORGANIZATION OF THIS VOLUME

We begin this volume with a section on broad psychological theories. This section includes basic psychological theories that concern personality, early childhood and adult development, rational choice, decision-making, the study of emotion, evolutionary psychology, genetics, and political rhetoric. Then we move to the substantive focus of different areas of political psychological research, which tend to cut across theoretical approaches. We start with elite behavior, first in the area of international relations and then in the area of domestic politics. The next section focuses on mass political behavior, including an analysis of political reasoning, political ideology, social justice, social influence, political communications, and political deliberation. The final section considers collective behavior, including identities, social movements, racial prejudice, migration and multiculturalism, discrimination, and intractable conflict.

We characterize political psychology as the application of psychology to politics, but we would like to see greater two-way communication between disciplines. Indeed, the study of political psychology provides potential insight into basic psychology, as is clear from the chapters in this volume. For example, Feldman discusses at some length the multidimensional nature of political ideology and conservatism that is at odds with their popular unidimensional conception in social psychology. Numerous chapters underscore the complexity of political sophistication, which cannot simply be equated with expertise and the efficient assimilation of new information but focuses instead on strong political biases, powerful partisan identities, and extensive motivated reasoning. While processes such as motivated reasoning are well known in psychology, they deserve even greater research attention within political psychology because of their political heft. Although many political psychologists, including authors in this volume, are drawn from the disciplines of psychology and political science, they also include historians, sociologists, anthropologists, psychiatrists, communications researchers, educators, and lawyers.

Before closing, we also want to refer the interested reader to several other recent volumes with different goals from our own but with somewhat similar titles. This *Handbook* is intended as a comprehensive statement of the current state of knowledge in political psychology. There are several other volumes in the *Oxford Handbooks* series that touch on similar aspects of political behavior but take a less explicitly psychological approach.

Handbooks edited by Russell Dalton and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (*The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*, 2007) and Robert Shapiro and Lawrence Jacobs (*The Oxford Handbook of American Public Opinion and the Media*, 2011) discuss topics such as political socialization, political communication, trust, and political emotions. The current volume goes more deeply into original psychological research, includes authors from both psychology and political science, and is unique in combining research on both elite and mass politics. The three handbooks provide excellent complementary reviews of political behavior research.

One other recent volume presents an interesting collection of individual research in political psychology. Borgida, Federico, and Sullivan edited *The Psychology of Democratic Citizenship* (2009), with chapters devoted to citizens' democratic capabilities. The volume includes scholars presenting their own research on political knowledge, persuasion, group identity, political tolerance, and the media. Topics and approaches overlap with those in the current *Handbook* but describe a single research enterprise rather than review a body of work, and are less singularly focused on psychological research and theory. Howard Lavine is the editor of the four-volume set *Political Psychology* (2010). The series includes reprints of classic articles in political psychology and is organized into four broad themes: theoretical approaches, public opinion, international relations, and intergroup relations. This series serves as an important reference work for students and scholars who wish to become acquainted with canonical writing and research studies in political psychology.

The current *Handbook* is a companion to these volumes in political psychology and political behavior that has a somewhat different purpose. This *Handbook* is the place to go to find out what is currently known about the many different fields in the umbrella topic of political psychology and learn more about psychology, political science, and their vibrant intersection.

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