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MORALLY CONVICTED POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND THE IMPORTANCE OF
DEMOCRATIC NORMS IN MAINTAINING A STRONG DEMOCRACY

by

Rebecca Frost-Brewer

Under the Direction of Judd Thornton, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2021

ABSTRACT

Morally convicted political attitudes, operationalized as a measure of egalitarianism and moral traditionalism, affect how important people consider democratic norms to be in maintaining a strong democracy in the United States. Stronger agreement with egalitarianism and more disagreement with moral traditionalism are both associated with an increase in placing more importance on democratic norms.

INDEX WORDS: Morally convicted attitudes, Egalitarianism, Moral traditionalism, Moral foundations theory, Democratic norms

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December 2021

DEDICATION

Thank you to my wife, Camilla, for being a listening ear as I brainstormed this idea.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my committee, Dr. Thornton, Dr. Richey, and Dr. Evans for their patience and direction.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Twenty years before Pat Buchanan declared a culture war in 1992, conservatives in the 1970s began advocating for a return to conservatism and traditional social and family values following the progress made during civil rights movements of the 1960s. Since the 1970s, the past forty years have seen Americans' ideological polarization increase to their highest recorded levels in history. Cultural issues such as allowing LGBTQIAs to serve in the military, strengthening women's rights, providing access to abortion and protection of reproductive rights, supporting marriage equality, favoring gun control, and acting to curb climate change have been wielded as cleavers for political gain, to divide traditional conservatives and progressive liberals. As Americans' ideological identities become more salient social identities, these cultural issues begin to take on representations of what Americans believe is right and what is wrong, which has implications for how key historical tenets of democracy are valued and respected. Individuals' perceptions that their opinions of political parties and political issues are connected to their core moral beliefs and fundamental sense of right and wrong are referred to as morally convicted attitudes. (Garrett and Bankert, 2020). Today, Buchanan's culture war has become a battle of these morally convicted attitudes on the defining issues of the day and how those attitudes may affect how important people view democratic norms in maintaining a strong democracy.

2 RESEARCH QUESTION

Morally convicted political attitudes heighten partisan hostility, contribute to affective polarization, lead to cynical views of the political opposition, and result in perceptions of outgroup animus (Garrett & Banker, 2020; Clifford, 2019; Ryan, 2014; Brambilla, et al., 2013); additionally, morally convicted attitudes lead to a willingness to accept violent means to achieve preferred ends (Skitka, 2010). These findings in of themselves are troubling when considering

the implications of heightened levels of hostility, polarization, animus, and acceptance of potential violence, but to date, the literature has yet to evaluate to what extent morally convicted attitudes affect how important Americans believe democratic norms are to maintaining a strong democracy in the United States. The stability of our democracy is not to be taken for granted; scholarship needs to continue investigating the varying external forces that may threaten that sustained stability. Thus, research question is: What is the effect of morally convicted attitudes on the importance of upholding democratic norms? This paper will review the literature and theories on morally convicted attitudes, moral foundations theory, and democratic norms. The methods section will detail the data used to assess the research question as well as the statistical models used to conduct the analysis. Lastly, a discussion of the results will be presented along with implications for future research.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Morally Convicted Attitudes and Moral Foundations Theory

Moral conviction is a frequent topic of research because people's social and political attitudes are frequently derived from their moral concerns (e.g., Bobocel, Son Hing, Davey, Stanley, & Zanna, 1998; Emler, 2002; Haidt, 2001, 2012; Skitka, 2002) and political orientation appears to "reflect the moral foundations [of individuals] that are considered most relevant" (Day, et al., 2014, p. 1560). Moral conviction is the perception that a person's attitude about a particular object is based on their moral beliefs about right and wrong (Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005; Skitka & Wisneski, 2011) and is "experienced as strong and absolute stances on moralized issues" (Van Zomeren, 2011, p. 737). Throughout the literature on morally convicted attitudes, scholars have reached consensus that "attitudes meaningfully differ in terms of whether they are held with moral conviction" (Ryan, 2014, p. 382). Skitka (2010) and Turiel (1983)

identify three characteristics of morally convicted attitudes: 1) they are perceived as universal; 2) they are experienced as objective; and 3) they are independent of external authority. To evaluate the effect of morally convicted attitudes on the importance of democratic norms, this conceptualization of morally convicted attitudes should be at the forefront of measures identified and used in conducting analysis.

Further, moral convictions are ripe for continued investigation because extant research indicates that moral convictions can predict variables such as political engagement, trust, and anger (Skitka, 2010; Mullen & Skitka, 2006). For instance, Skitka & Morgan (2014) found that morally convicted political attitudes are associated with the rejection of the rule of law and can motivate political violence, while Skitka (2010) concluded that varying attitudes of moral conviction can influence the willingness to accept violence to achieve preferred results. Ryan (2014) demonstrated that morally convicted attitudes can “arouse certain negative emotions, engender hostile opinions, and inspire punitive action” (p. 380) as well as evoke feelings of otherness and actions intended to drive people apart (see also Haidt, 2003; DeScioli & Kurzban, 2009). Additionally, much of the research conducted on moral conviction demonstrates that opposing moral foundations can explain the increasing conflict between liberals and conservatives because it appears that the moral foundations of liberals and conservatives are based on differing foundational elements (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Hunter, 1991; Jost, 2006; Lakoff, 2008; Skitka & Tetlock, 1993).

Building on the morality-relevant research of anthropologists (e.g., Fiske, 1991; Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1987) and psychologists (e.g., Kohlberg, 1969; Schwartz, 1992; Turiel, 1983), Haidt and colleagues have proposed that at least five foundations make up a person’s moral foundations: harm, fairness, ingroup, authority, and purity (Graham et al., 2013; Haidt

& Graham, 2007; Haidt & Joseph, 2007). Political scientists and psychologists alike have indicated that these five moral foundations can be a powerful predictor of ideological identification (Graham et al., 2009; Lakoff, 2008). For example, the individualizing foundations – care and fairness – are most closely associated with liberal ideology whereas the binding foundations – loyalty, authority, and sanctity – are most closely associated with conservative ideology (Haidt & Joseph, 2007). This proposition serves as the basis of moral foundations theory, which posits that “the morality of political liberals is built on the harm and fairness foundations, while the morality of political conservatives is built upon all five foundations” (Haidt & Graham, 2007, p. 107). In operationalizing moral conviction, it is important that the measures used capture these distinct foundations as driving a person’s attitude response.

This proposed clash of political attitudes has significant implications for political behavior, polarization, and civility. Garrett & Bankert (2020) show that people who base their political opinions on moral convictions are more likely to “display more partisan bias, distance and hostility” (p. 621) regardless of partisan strength. Since morality is about matters of harm, rights, and justice (Haidt & Graham, 2007), partisan moral convictions may contribute to polarized political attitudes that could result in heightened partisan anger and hostility. The normative implication for heightened partisan anger and hostility on the strength and stability of democracy should not be understated. The Economist Intelligence Unit includes the functioning of government, political participation, and political culture in its democracy index (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2020); thus, understanding how morally convicted attitudes may affect the importance of democratic norms is value added to the body of existing research.

H₁: Morally convicted attitudes affect how important democratic norms are seen to be in maintaining a strong democracy.

3.2 Democratic Norms

Democratic norms are unwritten rules and expected standards of behavior that stabilize and legitimize democracy (Azari & Smith, 2012). Goldstone and Ulfelder (2004) conclude that stable democracies promote fair and open competition, avoid political polarization, and impose constraints on executive authority. Dahl (2021) includes effective participation, inclusion, fundamental rights, and independent sources of information in his conceptualization of the features of an ideal democracy. In measuring democratic norms on the ANES, items ask for how important respondents believe specific norms are maintaining a strong democracy in the United States. These items include whether news organizations should be free to criticize political leaders; whether the three branches of government should keep one another from gaining too much political power; whether elected officials should face serious consequences for engaging in misconduct; and, whether people should agree on basic facts even if they disagree politically.

4 DATA AND METHODS

What is the effect of morally convicted attitudes on the importance of democratic norms in maintaining a strong democracy? This thesis uses the American National Election Studies 2020 Time Series Study data to analyze the extent to which morally convicted attitudes affect held beliefs on the importance of democratic norms in maintaining a strong democracy. The 2020 Time Series Study is a nationally representative sample of adults in the United States. From this data, I identified questions that reflect the explanatory variables, response variable, and control variables. For the explanatory variable of morally convicted attitudes (perceptions connected to one's core moral beliefs and fundamental sense of right and wrong), I have created two different scales: egalitarianism, a measurement comprised of questions related to equality and opportunity, and moral traditionalism, a measurement comprised of questions on moral

behavior and traditional family values. These two scales are necessary to complete this analysis because the ANES does not include a measure of morally convicted attitudes. Since morally convicted attitudes are the perception that a person's attitude about a particular object is based on their moral beliefs about right and wrong (Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005; Skitka & Wisneski, 2011), I have determined that the ANES' questions on egalitarianism and moral traditionalism can effectively represent those attitude perceptions on right and wrong. Egalitarianism is captured by the following items: that society should make sure everyone has equal opportunity, that the country would be better off if we worried less about equality, that it is not a big deal if some people have more chance in life, and that if people were treated more fairly, there would be fewer problems. Each item is assessed on a range from 1 (agree strongly) to 5 (disagree strongly) and each item is coded so that they run in the same direction. This constructed egalitarianism scale has demonstrated longevity in the field, following the seminal work of Feldman (1988) that used several items from the ANES to create an additive scale for equality of opportunity, similar to this egalitarianism scale. For the egalitarianism scale, an index score of 20 indicates strong disagreement with statements of egalitarianism whereas an index score of 4 indicates strong agreement with such statements. In other words, the higher the index score, the more strongly the respondent agrees with statements of egalitarianism. The mean egalitarian score is 11.2.

For moral traditionalism, the items included are as follows: the world is always changing, and we should adjust our view of moral behavior to those changes; and that this country would have many fewer problems if there were more emphasis on traditional family ties. Each item is assessed on a range from 1 (agree strongly) to 5 (disagree strongly) and each item is coded so that they run in the same direction. An index score of 10 indicates strong disagreement with statements of moral traditionalism, whereas an index score of 2 indicates strong agreement with

such statements; thus, a lower index score indicates more agreement with moral traditionalism. The mean moral traditionalism score is 5.4. These items for both the egalitarianism scale and the moral traditionalism scale moderately represent morally convicted attitudes because they tangentially respondents' perceived attitudes of right and wrong by incorporating questions on equality, equal opportunity, morality, and traditional values.

The response variable, the importance of democratic norms in maintaining a strong democracy, is comprised of the following items: that news organizations should be free to criticize political leaders; that the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government should keep one another from having too much power; that elected officials should face serious consequences if they engage in misconduct; and, that people should agree on basic facts even if they disagree politically. Each item is assessed on a range from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (extremely important) and each item is coded so that they run in the same direction. The democratic norms scale ranges from 0 to 20, with 0 indicating that democratic norms are not important at all to maintaining a strong democracy and 20 indicating that democratic norms are extremely important to maintaining a strong democracy. The mean index score for democratic norms is 17.0, which is quite high! Normatively, this bodes well for collective maintenance of a strong democracy, if the national sample from the ANES considers these selected democratic norms as very important.

Finally, one of the control variables is authoritarianism, from least authoritarian to most authoritarian. This scale is determined by a series of questions that ask the respondent what qualities are more important for children to possess, some of which are more associated with authoritarianism than others. The qualities from which the respondent determines which is more important are: independence or respect for others; curiosity or good manners; obedience or self-

reliance; and, being considerate or well-behaved. The authoritarianism scale ranges from 2 (least authoritarian) to 8 (most authoritarian) with a mean score of 6.0. An additional control variable is ideological identification, as determined by the respondent’s self-placement along a seven-point ideological scale, from Extremely Liberal to Extremely Conservative; the mean ideological identification as 4.1, indicating “moderate; middle of the road.”

To ascertain internal validity of these scales, I calculated Cronbach’s Alpha for each additive index, with results included in Table 1.

Table 1

Index	Raw Alpha	Reliability
Moral Egalitarianism	0.75	Acceptable
Democratic Norms	0.72	Acceptable
Moral Traditionalism	0.50	Poor
Authoritarianism	0.66	Questionable

In conducting exploratory analysis of the variables, I created a histogram of the distribution of the democratic norms scale (Figure 1), which shows that the survey sample of this scale has a mean of 17.03, standard deviation of 2.73, and moderately right-skewed distribution at -0.95. Normatively, this distribution and its 17.03 mean are encouraging as they demonstrate most respondents consider democratic norms that can maintain a strong democracy between moderately important and very important. With right skewedness, I also calculated the 10% trimmed mean, resulting in a trimmed mean of 17.3, further supporting the normative implications of having a sample that considers democratic norms important in maintaining a strong democracy.

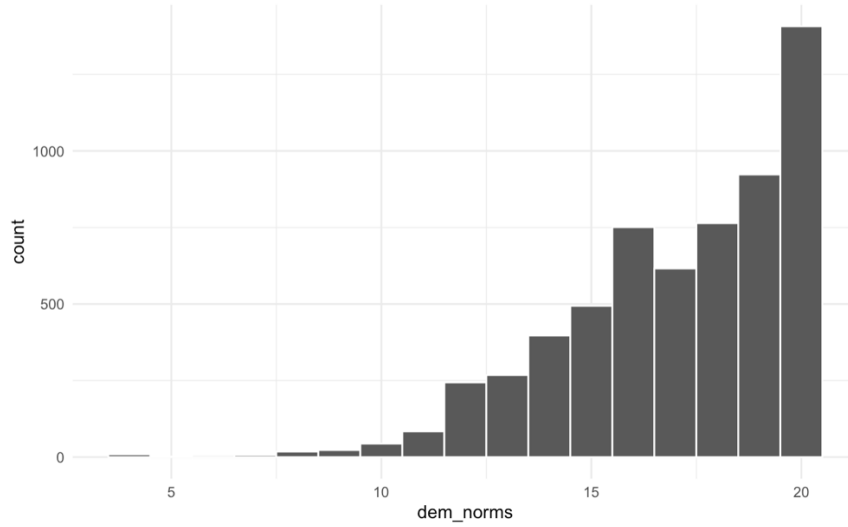


Figure 1

However, the boxplot of this distribution (Graph 2) provides more context to the right-skewedness showing the range of outliers in the sample, all of which are in the bottom 25th percentile. While the sample does not include many responses noting democratic norms to be not at all important or very little important, these outliers nonetheless communicate a narrative that democratic norms as important to maintaining a strong democracy is not a foregone conclusion.

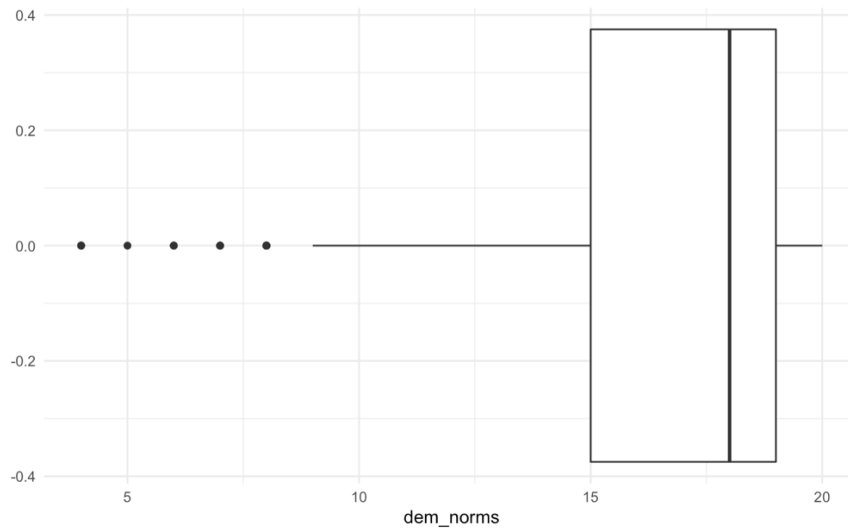


Figure 2

Further exploratory data analysis shows a linear relationship between ideology and importance of democratic norms with importance on maintaining a strong democracy declining as self-placement trends towards Extremely Conservative. A linear relationship also exists between importance of democratic norms and egalitarianism, with the importance of democratic norms increasing as egalitarianism increases. Lastly, moral traditionalism and the importance of democratic norms also share a linear relationship, with the importance of democratic norms decreasing as moral traditionalism becomes stronger.

To test my hypothesis that morally convicted attitudes affect the importance of democratic norms, I initially conducted two linear regression models, the effect of egalitarianism and moral traditionalism, respectively, on importance of democratic norms while controlling for ideology, authoritarianism, political interest, economic perspective, sex, age, and education. I determined two separate regressions were necessary because I selected egalitarianism and moral traditionalism to represent morally convicted attitudes, but since they are so highly correlated, these independent variables needed to be regressed separately to ensure the minimization of any endogenous influence on the dependent variable.

Further, I also disaggregated the scale of democratic norms to analyze the effect of egalitarianism and moral traditionalism on each of the democratic norms items. This disaggregation allows for each regression model to evaluate the linear relationship between the independent variables and each item of the dependent variable on their own. In doing so, the analysis can demonstrate if there is greater association between certain items rather than others, and how that might also affect the interpretation of the results.

5 RESULTS

The first regression analysis (Table 2) shows the effect of egalitarianism on the importance of democratic norms. A 1-point increase in egalitarianism is associated with a 0.07 increase in the importance of democratic norms. Stronger agreement with egalitarianism is associated with an increase in placing more importance on maintaining a strong democracy and this result is statistically significant. While statistically significant, a 0.07 increase in the importance of democratic norms is such a small margin in practical application. Further, this model also shows that a 1-point increase in ideology is associated with a 0.34 decrease in importance of democratic norms and a 1-point increase in authoritarianism is also associated with a 0.49 decrease in importance of democratic norms, both which are statistically significant as well. In this model showing the effect of egalitarianism, the results for ideology and authoritarianism indicate that as ideology increases (thus, moves towards Extremely Conservative) and as strength of authoritarianism increases, then the importance of democratic norms in maintaining a strong democracy declines. Given the literature on egalitarianism, liberalism, and authoritarianism, this finding is expected and still provides important context for the normative implications of this regression model. For those who trend towards egalitarianism, the results show a propensity to consider democratic norms as important for maintaining a strong democracy.

Table 2 The Effect of Egalitarianism on the Importance of Democratic Norms

<i>Predictors</i>	dem norms		
	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	20.78	20.07, 21.49	< 0.001
Egalitarian scale	0.07	0.04, 0.10	< 0.001
Ideology	-0.34	-0.38, -0.30	< 0.001
Authoritarian scale	-0.49	-0.56, -0.41	< 0.001
Education	0.26	0.22, 0.29	< 0.001
Sex	-0.56	-0.68, -0.44	< 0.001
Political interest	-0.67	-0.76, -0.57	< 0.001

Economic perception	0.04	-0.03, 0.11	0.240
Age	0.01	0.00, 0.01	< 0.001
Observations	6057		
R ² / R ² adjusted	0.208 / 0.207		

The second regression (Table 3) shows the effect of moral traditionalism on the importance of democratic norms. In this model, a 1-point increase in moral traditionalism (moving towards strongly disagreeing with moral traditionalism) is associated with a 0.06 increase in the importance of democratic norms, and this finding is statistically significant. In other words, more disagreement with moral traditionalism is associated with placing more importance on democratic norms. This result indicates that moving from strongly agree with moral traditionalism (2) to strongly disagree with moral traditionalism (10) results in a decrease of less than one point on the scale of democratic norms importance. The controlling effects of ideology and authoritarianism are nearly identical to that of the results of the egalitarian model (Table 2). From a normative standpoint, these regression results are important as they indicate a positive correlation between disagreeing with moral traditionalism and placing importance on democratic norms for maintaining a strong democracy. Given the literature on moral traditionalism, this association makes sense because disagreeing with moral traditionalism predicts less emphasis on individual freedom and traditional values and more acceptance for democratic norms.

Table 3 The Effect of Moral Traditionalism on Strong Democracy

<i>Predictors</i>	dem norms		
	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	21.23	20.57, 21.90	< 0.001
Moral traditionalism scale	0.06	0.01, 0.10	0.008
Ideology	-0.35	-0.39, -0.31	< 0.001
Authoritarian scale	-0.48	-0.56, -0.41	< 0.001
Education	0.26	0.23, 0.29	< 0.001
Sex	-0.55	-0.68, -0.43	< 0.001
Political interest	-0.66	-0.76, -0.57	< 0.001

Economic perception	0.05	-0.02, 0.11	0.175
Age	0.01	0.00, 0.01	<0.001
Observations	6057		
R ² / R ² adjusted	0.206 / 0.205		

The research question asks what effect morally convicted attitudes has on the importance of upholding democratic norms to maintain a strong democracy and the results indicate that both egalitarianism (people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities) and moral traditionalism (respecting and upholding traditional values and morals) – taken together to operationalize morally convicted attitudes – influence the importance of democratic norms.

5.1 Regression Models Disaggregating the Democratic Norms Scale

When disaggregating the importance of democratic norms scale (Tables 4, 5, 6, 7), each individual item regressed with moral traditionalism is still statistically significant except the measure assessing whether people should agree on basic facts even if they disagree politically. Each individual democratic norm is a measurement of how important the respondent feels the norm is to maintain a strong democracy, from “not important at all” (1) to “extremely important” (5). When moral traditionalism is 0 (strongly agree with moral traditionalism, the press norm averages 4.73 (“very important”). When moral traditionalism increases by one point, then there is an associated 0.02 increase in the press norm. The effects of moral traditionalism on the democratic norms including freedom of the press, separation of the branches, and consequences for misconduct are all statistically significant; however, the magnitude of each effect is quite small. When looking at the norm that the press be free to criticize political leaders, a one-point increase in moral traditionalism (more disagreement with moral traditionalism) results in a 0.25-point decrease in ideological identification (toward extremely liberal). In other words, when

evaluating the linear relationship between moral traditionalism and the freedom of the press norm, there is an associated effect on ideology, moving towards a liberal identification.

Table 4

<i>Predictors</i>	norm news			norm branches		
	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	4.73	4.49, 4.96	< 0.001	4.40	4.25, 4.56	< 0.001
Moral traditionalism scale	0.02	0.00, 0.04	0.015	0.03	0.02, 0.05	< 0.001
Ideology	-0.25	-0.27, -0.24	< 0.001	-0.05	-0.06, -0.03	< 0.001
Education	0.11	0.10, 0.13	< 0.001	0.08	0.07, 0.09	< 0.001
Sex	-0.32	-0.38, -0.26	< 0.001	-0.11	-0.15, -0.07	< 0.001
Political interest	-0.23	-0.28, -0.19	< 0.001	-0.15	-0.18, -0.12	< 0.001
Economic perception	0.06	0.03, 0.09	< 0.001	-0.00	-0.02, 0.02	0.827
Age	0.00	0.00, 0.00	< 0.001	0.00	0.00, 0.00	0.001
Observations	6057			6057		
R ² / R ² adjusted	0.198 / 0.197			0.095 / 0.094		

Table 5

<i>Predictors</i>	norm officials			norm facts		
	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	4.58	4.45, 4.71	< 0.001	4.61	4.43, 4.79	< 0.001
Moral traditionalism scale	0.02	0.01, 0.03	0.001	0.01	-0.01, 0.02	0.210
Ideology	-0.03	-0.04, -0.02	< 0.001	-0.07	-0.09, -0.06	< 0.001
Education	0.04	0.04, 0.05	< 0.001	0.05	0.04, 0.06	< 0.001
Sex	-0.01	-0.04, 0.03	0.688	-0.11	-0.16, -0.07	< 0.001
Political interest	-0.14	-0.17, -0.12	< 0.001	-0.16	-0.19, -0.13	< 0.001
Economic perception	0.01	-0.01, 0.02	0.526	-0.02	-0.04, 0.00	0.099
Age	0.00	0.00, 0.00	< 0.001	-0.00	-0.00, 0.00	0.986
Observations	6057			6057		
R ² / R ² adjusted	0.063 / 0.062			0.059 / 0.058		

These results are repeated when each individual item is regressed with egalitarianism (Tables 6 and 7), including agreement on basic facts not being statistically significant. Following the disaggregation of the items that comprise the democratic norms scale, these results indicate

that the estimates and effects between moral traditionalism (Tables 4a and 4b) and egalitarianism (Tables 5a and 5b) are nearly identical. Thus, the findings of the earlier regression models (Tables 2 and 3) represent the holistic effect of the democratic norms scale as opposed to the possibility that one or two individual norms may be overly influential in the scale.

Table 6

<i>Predictors</i>	norm news			norm branches		
	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	4.38	4.11, 4.65	< 0.001	4.34	4.16, 4.52	< 0.001
Egalitarian scale	0.04	0.03, 0.06	< 0.001	0.02	0.01, 0.03	< 0.001
Ideology	-0.25	-0.27, -0.23	< 0.001	-0.05	-0.06, -0.03	< 0.001
Education	0.11	0.10, 0.13	< 0.001	0.08	0.07, 0.09	< 0.001
Sex	-0.33	-0.39, -0.27	< 0.001	-0.11	-0.15, -0.07	< 0.001
Political interest	-0.23	-0.28, -0.19	< 0.001	-0.16	-0.18, -0.13	< 0.001
Economic perception	0.05	0.02, 0.09	0.001	-0.00	-0.03, 0.02	0.643
Age	0.00	0.00, 0.00	< 0.001	0.00	0.00, 0.00	< 0.001
Observations	6057			6057		
R ² / R ² adjusted	0.201 / 0.201			0.094 / 0.093		

Table 7

<i>Predictors</i>	norm officials			norm facts		
	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	4.52	4.37, 4.67	< 0.001	4.66	4.45, 4.86	< 0.001
Egalitarian scale	0.01	0.01, 0.02	0.001	0.00	-0.01, 0.01	1.000
Ideology	-0.03	-0.04, -0.02	< 0.001	-0.08	-0.09, -0.06	< 0.001
Education	0.05	0.04, 0.05	< 0.001	0.05	0.04, 0.06	< 0.001
Sex	-0.01	-0.04, 0.03	0.690	-0.11	-0.16, -0.07	< 0.001
Political interest	-0.14	-0.17, -0.12	< 0.001	-0.16	-0.19, -0.13	< 0.001
Economic perception	0.00	-0.01, 0.02	0.652	-0.02	-0.04, 0.00	0.092
Age	0.00	0.00, 0.00	< 0.001	-0.00	-0.00, 0.00	0.989
Observations	6057			6057		
R ² / R ² adjusted	0.063 / 0.062			0.059 / 0.058		

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results indicate that morally convicted political attitudes, operationalized as a measure of egalitarianism and moral traditionalism, do affect how important respondents

consider democratic norms to be in maintaining a strong democracy. Stronger agreement with egalitarianism and more disagreement with moral traditionalism are both associated with an increase in placing more importance on democratic norms. In other words, more agreement with beliefs in equality and equal opportunity and more disagreement with commitment to traditional values are associated with considering democratic norms as important in maintaining a strong democracy. While the results have valuable normative implications – for example, the positive association between agreement with positions of equality and importance of democratic norms indicates that a more egalitarian viewpoint lends itself perhaps to more support for democratic norms – there are significant weaknesses in the methodology of this research.

Conceptualizing morally convicted attitudes as being represented by both egalitarianism and moral traditionalism may not accurately measure how the literature defines moral conviction. Unfortunately, in electing to use the ANES data, there appears to be a mismatch between the moral foundations theory upon which my hypothesis is based, and the actual data used to test said hypothesis. Thus, this leaves much room for future research to better identify a measurement that more accurately measures moral conviction. For example, measuring respondents' perception that their feelings are being invoked based on their moral beliefs about right and wrong could perhaps be better accomplished through a survey- or questionnaire- based experiment. By providing participants with specific objects to which moral conviction may be elicited, survey responses may more acutely measure these perceptions. Additionally, the poor internal validity of the moral traditionalism additive index provides another reason to find a more robust measure of moral conviction.

Understanding the effect of morally convicted attitudes is an important area for further research given the politicization of culture and social issues. The country has seen increasing

levels of affective polarization and greater frequencies of political hostility and incivility. While this analysis does not contribute robust findings to the discourse, the study can be expanded upon through more sophisticated quantitative measures and survey experiments to more thoroughly investigate the question at hand.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

ANES 2020 Selected Questions

Ideological Identification

V201200: 7pt scale liberal-conservative self-placement: Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?

Democratic Norms

V201366: How important that news organizations free to criticize political leaders

V201367: How important branches of government keep one another from too much power

V201368: How important elected officials face serious consequences if they engage in misconduct

V201369: How important that people agree on basic facts even if they disagree politically

Egalitarianism

V202260: Society should make sure everyone has equal opportunity

V202261: We'd be better off if worried less about equality

V202262: It's not a big problem if some have more chance in life

V202263: If people were treated more fairly would be fewer probs

Moral Traditionalism

V202264: The world is changing and we should adjust view of moral behavior

V202265: Fewer problems if there was more emphasis on traditional family values