

# Bridging the Partisan Divide: Self-Affirmation Reduces Ideological Closed-Mindedness and Inflexibility in Negotiation

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Three studies link resistance to probative information and intransigence in negotiation to concerns of identity maintenance. Each shows that affirmations of personal integrity (vs. nonaffirmation or threat) can reduce resistance and intransigence but that this effect occurs only when individuals' partisan identity and/or identity-related convictions are made salient. Affirmation made participants' assessment of a report critical of U.S. foreign policy less dependent on their political views, but only when the identity relevance of the issue rather than the goal of rationality was salient (Study 1). Affirmation increased concession making in a negotiation over abortion policy, but again this effect was moderated by identity salience (Studies 2 and 3). Indeed, although affirmed negotiators proved relatively more open to compromise when either the salience of their true convictions or the importance of remaining faithful to those convictions was heightened, the reverse was true when the salient goal was compromise. The theoretical and applied significance of these findings are discussed.

*Keywords:* self-affirmation, attitudes, bias, negotiation, conflict

People generally resist arguments and evidence that challenge the validity of long-held beliefs (Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979). Partisans in negotiation similarly resist agreements that demand compromise, even when the cost of inflexibility is heavy (De Dreu & Carnevale, 2003). The research reported here rests on the premise that people resist persuasion attempts and pragmatic negotiation compromises in part because to do otherwise would be costly to their sense of identity and self-integrity (see Cohen, Aronson, & Steele, 2000; Jacks & O'Brien, 2004; Kunda, 1990; Sherman & Cohen, 2006; cf. Gerber & Green, 1999).

The need for self-integrity—to see oneself as good, virtuous, and efficacious—is a basic human motivation (Steele, 1988; see also Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Master, 2006; Sherman & Cohen, 2006). To the extent that people derive self-integrity from their social or group identities, they will be allegiant to them (Cohen,

2003; Sherman & Kim, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The present research posits that the centrality of a given identity as a source of self-integrity varies as a function of situational or contextual factors. For example, people's political identities and the beliefs linked to them should contribute relatively more to their personal integrity during times of political crises. Under such conditions of high identity salience, the adoption and maintenance of identity-consistent beliefs buttress self-integrity. Conversely, under conditions of high identity salience, openness to identity-challenging information or accommodations poses a threat to integrity. Such openness both threatens one's personal identity or *ideal self* (Higgins, 1987; Stone & Cooper, 2001) at a time when it may be especially valuable and places one at risk of interpersonal costs such as rejection and denigration by those who share one's identity (Marques, Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988). In short, the costs of openness to identity-challenging information should prove more acute as the salience or relevance of the identity in question increases.

One effective way to buffer people against such costs of openness, we suggest, is to allow them to affirm their self-integrity in an alternative domain (Steele, 1988; see also Sherman & Cohen, 2006), for example, by reflecting on overarching personal values or on a prized skill (Cohen et al., 2006). Indeed, there is previous research evidence documenting that such *self-affirmation* makes people relatively more open to information and ideas that would otherwise prove threatening to their ideological identity (Cohen et al., 2000). The effect of self-affirmation, we further suggest, is moderated by the relative salience of a particular identity and the

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salience and strength of its linkage to the task facing the individual. More specifically, we suggest that self-affirmation should increase people's openness to information, ideas, and courses of action that conflict with a situationally salient identity.

The present research pursues the implications of our analysis for the promotion of open-mindedness in debate and flexibility in negotiation, with the goal of advancing an understanding of self-affirmation processes and the ways in which the bases of self-integrity are subject to situational influence. An ironic implication of our analysis, as we explain and seek to document, is that self-affirmation promotes greater open-mindedness in situations that focus individuals on identity defense rather than on the goal of rationality or pragmatism.

Our conceptual analysis integrates two research traditions and literatures: one dealing with identity salience and one with self-affirmation. The first suggests that situations differ in how much they highlight a particular identity and its psychological importance (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994; Turner, 1991). The second suggests that self-affirmations lessen cognitive biases serving to protect identity (Cohen et al., 2006; Sherman & Cohen, 2006). We briefly review each line of investigation.

### Identity Salience

An important lesson of contemporary social psychology is that people hold multiple identities and that the situational salience of a given identity affects cognition, emotion, and behavior (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000; Markus & Wurf, 1987). Self-categorization theory in particular asserts that people may categorize themselves in terms of different identities, each of which may in turn prompt different cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses (Oakes et al., 1994; Turner, 1991; see also Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997). There is ample evidence, furthermore, that situational cues affect self-categorization. In one study, for example, students in a psychology course showed themselves to be more influenced by the ostensible attitudes of fellow psychology students when they had been asked to think about their identity as "psychology students" rather than as "unique individuals" (Wellen, Hogg, & Terry, 1998). In another, multicultural individuals displayed attributional styles characteristic of Eastern, collectivistic cultures (emphasizing situational rather than dispositional influences on behavior) when their Asian identity was primed, but they displayed attributional styles characteristic of Western, individualistic cultures (emphasizing dispositional rather than situational influences) when their European identity was primed (Hong et al., 2000).

Theory and research on persuasion further suggest the moderating role of situationally induced identity salience. The functional approach to the study of attitudes (Abelson & Prentice, 1989; Katz, 1960) holds that the same attitude can have a different psychological basis or function for different individuals, and we would argue, for the same individual in different contexts. The heuristic-systematic model of persuasion posits that three types of motivations—that is, for accuracy, defense of self-definitional beliefs, and maintenance of positive social relationships—moderate responses to persuasive messages (Chaiken, Giner-Sorolla, & Chert, 1996; Chen, Duckworth, & Chaiken, 1999; see also Fleming & Petty, 2000). The relative strength of these motives and the poten-

tially biasing influence of each on message processing depend on the nature of the situation or social context. For instance, when one is told that the research budget of one's institution is being scrutinized by a critic of one's discipline, refutational biases assert themselves. By contrast, when one anticipates interacting with a prospective client, relevant persuasive communications are apt to be processed in a manner congenial to the expected attitude of that client (Chen et al., 1999).

Negotiation behavior may similarly be influenced by contextual cues. As Thomas Schelling (1960) observed, negotiation is a *mixed-motive interaction* in which the parties typically hold competing motivations to cooperate, compete, save face, protect self-esteem, receive fair treatment, acquire power, and be rational. They also must deal with counterparts holding similarly mixed motives. Situational cues again can activate different motives and thus affect behavior (Bargh, 1997; De Dreu & Carnevale, 2003). For instance, the label attached to a prisoner's dilemma task dramatically affects negotiation behavior (Liberman, Samuels, & Ross, 2004). When the task was presented as the "Wall Street Game," only a third of the participants cooperated with their negotiation partners and the rest defected. By contrast, when the same task was presented as the "Community Game," 70% of the participants cooperated.

Situational cues, we suggest, determine whether a given behavior is integrity-affirming or integrity-threatening. Whereas resistance to persuasion and refusal to compromise may be integrity-affirming in contexts that make salient the importance of fidelity to a cause connected to one's identity, the same displays of steadfastness would be integrity-threatening in contexts that make salient one's identity as a level-headed negotiator or cooperative member of the larger community. Social identity theory reminds us that people derive a sense of social and personal worth from the identities they hold (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; see also Cohen & Garcia, 2005; Oakes et al., 1994; Spears et al., 1997), but the role of any particular identity in contributing to that sense of worth depends in part on its situational salience.

### Identity, Belief, and Self-Affirmation

Beliefs relevant to controversial issues often seem to be not only congruent with but also reflective of ideological, national, ethnic, or other group identities (Cohen, 2003; Fleming & Petty, 2000; Lewin, 1952; Maoz, Ward, Katz, & Ross, 2002). For example, beliefs about capital punishment, industrial pollution, and private gun ownership seem tied to people's identity as liberal versus conservative, individualist versus communitarian (Ellsworth & Ross, 1983; Kahan, Braman, Gastil, Slovic, & Mertz, 2005). In persuasion or negotiation settings relevant to such issues, the benefits of open-mindedness and flexibility may be eclipsed by psychological costs to identity.

People become more willing to bear such costs and thus are more inclined to evaluate new information and negotiation opportunities in an unbiased manner if they are allowed to affirm their overall sense of self-integrity through avowals and other positive thoughts and feelings in an alternative domain of identity (Steele, 1988; see also Sherman & Cohen, 2006). In one series of studies, partisans on issues such as capital punishment and abortion who received no self-affirmation displayed standard information assimilation biases by accepting belief-congruent information at face

value, resisting belief-incongruent evidence, and becoming more polarized in their views when exposed to mixed evidence (Cohen et al., 2000). By contrast, partisans who had been instructed to reflect on an important personal value such as their relationships with friends or who received positive feedback on a valued skill proved relatively open to identity-threatening information and relatively unbiased in their assimilation of new evidence. Similar examples of debiasing through self-affirmation have been documented using a variety of persuasion topics, supporting the notion that affirmation lessens the psychological costs of identity-inconsistent behavior (Correll, Spencer, & Zanna, 2004; Jacks & O'Brien, 2004; McQueen & Klein, 2006; Raghunathan & Trope, 2002; Reed & Aspinwall, 1998; Sherman, Nelson, & Steele, 2000).

The debiasing effect of self-affirmation, we suggest, depends on the particular identity made salient in the persuasion or negotiation setting. When the setting heightens the salience of an individual's partisan identity and/or commitment to a given position on an issue relevant to that identity, that individual will be inclined to give greater weight to the identity costs of openness and compromise—costs that are borne more willingly when an alternative source of self-integrity is affirmed. Conversely, threatening an alternative source of self-integrity makes a person less willing to bear the costs of openness. When the setting reduces the salience of an individual's partisan identity, by contrast, that individual will give less weight to the identity costs of openness and compromise, and prior affirmation of or threats to an alternative source of self-integrity should have relatively little impact on openness.

### Overview of Studies

All studies featured a manipulation of the salience of an identity that would be relevant either to the later review of a persuasive report or to participation in a negotiation. All the studies also included a self-affirmation manipulation in which participants either affirmed a personal value irrelevant to the pertinent political domain or were exposed to a threat to such a value (McQueen & Klein, 2006; Sherman & Cohen, 2006). We predicted that self-affirmation would decrease bias and increase openness and compromise under conditions of identity salience rather than identity nonsalience. A pilot study and Study 1 examined the response of self-described *patriots* and *antipatriots* to a cogent report critical of U.S. foreign policy. Studies 2 and 3 extended our conceptual analysis beyond openness to persuasive information to willingness to make necessary, but personally distasteful, political compromises in negotiation, with U.S. abortion law rather than foreign policy the focal topic.

### Pilot Study

Although the responses of Americans to the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were varied, two ends of the continuum were apparent. At one end were people who responded with expressions of patriotism and uncritical endorsement of both U.S. foreign policy and the countermeasures proposed by the president and his cabinet. At the other end were people who criticized U.S. foreign policies and contended that aspects of these policies may have incited, if not justified, the hatred reflected in the attacks.

Although the former group generally holds a pro-America or patriotic identity, at least some members of the latter group hold what Ogbu (1987) describes as an *oppositional identity*, in which individuals define themselves in opposition to another (often dominant) group. We assessed how these conflicting identities (patriot vs. antipatriot)<sup>1</sup> affected evaluation of a report critical of U.S. foreign policy and suggestive of its responsibility in promoting the conditions that culminated in the 9/11 attacks. Respondents' patriotic identity was measured using a mass-administered questionnaire completed earlier in the quarter. (Materials and methods are described in detail in Study 1.)

Two independent variables were manipulated. The first variable involved affirmation of or threat to participants' self-integrity. Half the participants wrote about the importance of a personal value and how they lived up to that value, whereas the remaining participants wrote about how they had failed to live up to such a value (for research demonstrating the success of this manipulation in activating self-affirming thoughts and feelings, see Cohen et al., 2006; Fein & Spencer, 1997; McQueen & Klein, 2006; Sherman et al., 2000; Sherman & Cohen, 2006).

The second manipulation, which we predicted would determine the impact of the self-affirmation manipulation, involved the salience of participants' patriot or antipatriot identity. In the national identity salient condition (hereafter referred to as the identity salient condition), the experimenter wore a small U.S. flag pin on her sweater, and the study was described as focusing on "current events and issues." The flag pin served to make salient participants' identification, or lack of identification, with the United States. In contrast, in the rationality salient (i.e., identity nonsalient) condition, we sought to minimize motivations exerting a directional bias on information processing. Accordingly, we focused participants on the goal of being objective and rational—a focus that should promote a deliberative, evenhanded review of judgment-relevant information (Chen et al., 1999). Whereas national identity dictates a direction to one's conclusions and actions, rationality does not (De Dreu & Carnevale, 2003). In the rationality salient condition, the experimenter wore a white lab coat, and the study was described as involving "rational judgment and decision making." We assumed that the white lab coat would divert attention from participants' patriotic (or antipatriotic) identity (for research demonstrating the efficacy of this manipulation in activating rationality goals, see Simon et al., 1997).

Participants then read the report critical of U.S. foreign policy and responded to a series of questions assessing their openness to that report. Average openness ( $\alpha = .88$ ) ranged from 1 to 9, with higher numbers representing greater openness.

Because participants varied in their level of patriotic identity, we treated the degree to which their patriotic identity predicted openness as the index of assimilation bias. We examined the extent to

<sup>1</sup> The term *antipatriots* designates people who reject the canonical definition of patriotism: the "my country, right or wrong" mindset of uncritical allegiance. Of course, people can be critical of their country's policies and yet be patriotic, as in historian Howard Zinn's assertion, "Dissent is the highest form of patriotism" (Basco, 2002). However, antipatriots in the present study rated themselves (in mass screening) both as opposed to American foreign policy and as unpatriotic, and the two items were highly correlated ( $r = .74, p = .001$ ).

which bias was reduced by affirmation under conditions of heightened identity salience versus rationality salience.

Figure 1 shows that in three of the four conditions patriots evaluated the report more negatively than did antipatriots, with patriotic identity accounting for fully 25% of the variance in responses to the report ( $r = -.50, p < .001$ ). But in one condition—the one that heightened the salience of national identity and provided self-affirmation—that relationship was eliminated. The hypothesized three-way interaction involving identity salience (identity salient =  $-1$ , rationality salient =  $+1$ ), affirmation condition (affirmation =  $-1$ , threat =  $+1$ ), and patriotic identity (standardized) was apparent,  $B = .29, t(69) = 2.10, p = .04$ , as was the two-way interaction between patriotic identity and affirmation condition in the identity salient condition,  $B = -.43, t(69) = 2.02, p = .047$ .

In summary, when the salience of respondents' national identity was heightened, self-affirmation led them to show relatively little bias in assimilating information relevant to that identity. By contrast, in the absence of such heightened salience of national identity, and in the presence of situational cues that emphasized rationality, respondents displayed bias in assimilating the information in question, regardless of whether the prior task affirmed or undermined their self-integrity. Making participants' identity as a patriot (or antipatriot) salient presumably heightened their motivation to protect that aspect of their identity by accepting (or rejecting) a report critical of the U.S. government. Offering participants in this identity salient condition an opportunity to affirm a source of identity unrelated to their political beliefs fully debiased them. It made their evaluations independent of their national identity, eliminating the robust tendency for members of opposing

groups to perceive social stimuli differently (Hastorf & Cantril, 1954; Lord et al., 1979). These results dovetail with prior research showing that self-affirmation reduces motivated rejection of belief-disconfirming evidence and motivated acceptance of belief-confirming evidence (Cohen et al., 2000; Correll et al., 2004).

### Study 1

Study 1 sought to replicate and extend the results of the pilot study by means of a simpler design and a salience manipulation free of the potential confounds in the pilot study. First, only self-described patriots were recruited. Second, the relevance of the counterattitudinal report to participants' identity-based convictions versus their commitment to rationality was made salient through a set of questionnaire self-descriptions rather than cues provided by the experimenter's apparel. In a convictions salient condition, participants were led to identify themselves as individuals who stand up for their core beliefs and values, including, presumably, the political convictions prompting them to see themselves as patriots. In the rationality salient condition, participants were led to identify themselves as individuals who try to be rational. Our prediction was that self-affirmation would prompt greater openness in the convictions salient condition than in the rationality salient condition.

These and other changes in procedure eliminated several possible confounds associated with the salience manipulation in the pilot study. They eliminated the possibility that the salience manipulation would convey information about the experimenter's own political views or otherwise confound identity salience with interpersonal rather than intrapersonal considerations. They also minimized the possibility that the salience manipulation activated mental categories related to the persuasive topic, as the U.S. flag pin may have done. Additionally, because the affirmation manipulation preceded rather than followed the salience manipulation, Study 1 ruled out confounds arising from the order of the manipulations.

Study 1 examined processes underlying the effect of affirmation under the two salience conditions. We examined whether affirmation encourages less biased information processing (see Reed & Aspinwall, 1998) by assessing whether the thoughts and feelings participants directed at the report were more balanced in the affirmation condition than in the threat condition. We also assessed whether affirmation leads people to trivialize the importance of the attitude issue and thus reduces their motivation to engage in biased information processing (Simon, Greenberg, & Brehm, 1995). We further considered the related possibility that affirmation decreases depth of processing (Worth & Mackie, 1987), such that people fail to register the claims of the message or its implications for identity.

Study 1 also included two new sets of premeasures—one set dealing with identity centrality and one with degree of prior knowledge about the persuasive topic—that might moderate the effects of the experimental manipulations. The former set consisted of items examining the extent to which participants deemed their national identity to be central to their self-integrity. We examined whether people who view their national identity as central to their self-integrity would be more concerned with maintaining that identity in the face of the critical report, and thus more responsive to affirmation, than would be people who view that identity as relatively peripheral to their self-integrity (see also

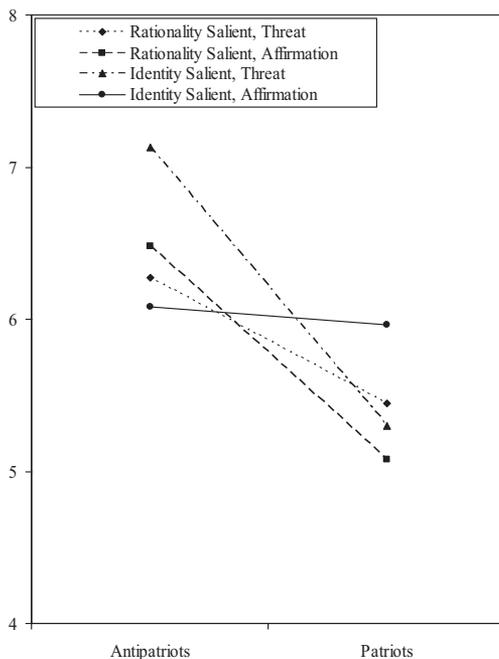


Figure 1. Mean openness to persuasive report (represented on the y axis) as a function of political identity (patriot vs. antipatriot) and the two experimental manipulations: Pilot study. Higher values represent greater openness. Scale is from 1 to 9.

Correll et al., 2004; Zuwerink & Devine, 1996). The latter set of items examined self-reported knowledge about the topic addressed in the report. We assessed whether affirmation has less impact on people who are relatively knowledgeable about the issue and who may thus have more crystallized beliefs.

### Method

#### *Experimental Design, Participants, and Pretest Measures*

Study 1 featured a 2 (affirmation vs. threat)  $\times$  2 (convictions salient vs. rationality salient) factorial design. A mass-administered questionnaire completed by participants earlier in the semester assessed patriotic identity and beliefs. Respondents rated how much they agreed with the statements, "I am patriotic" and "Generally speaking, the United States government is a force for good in the world" (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Only students indicating at least a 4 or above on each scale were recruited ( $M_s = 5.79, 5.47$ ;  $SD_s = 0.97, 0.98$ , respectively). In the final sample, the two items proved to be correlated,  $r = .58, p < .001$  ( $r = .74, p < .001$ , in the pilot study). They were averaged into a composite ( $M = 5.63, SD = 0.87$ ). Forty-three students (22 women and 21 men) participated in Study 1.

The pretest included two additional sets of measures. One set assessed identity centrality. Participants used separate 7-point rating scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) in response to three items: "Being an American is an important part of who I am," "Being an American is important to my sense of self-esteem," and "I embrace American values." The other set, featuring the same rating scales, assessed knowledge of U.S. foreign policy: "I am well informed about U.S. foreign policy" and "I spend a lot of time reading news articles about U.S. foreign policy." (See Cohen [2003] for a validation of self-reports of such knowledge.) Responses to the two sets of items were used to create indices of identity centrality ( $\alpha = .67$ ;  $M = 5.28, SD = 0.95$ ) and issue knowledge ( $\alpha = .89$ ;  $M = 4.13, SD = 1.61$ ).

#### *Procedure*

Students participated in the study individually. They were greeted by an experimenter who was unaware of the participants' condition assignments. Participants were told at the outset that they would take part in two studies—the first concerned with "personal characteristics" and the second with "issues of communication."

*Manipulation of self-affirmation versus self-threat.* After being assured of the confidentiality of their responses, participants undertook the personal characteristics study, for which they received a packet with the cover page titled, "Study on Personal Characteristics and Life Domains." The instructions in this packet contained the manipulation of self-affirmation versus self-threat. All participants first read a list of "personal characteristics and life domains" (e.g. "sense of humor," "relations with friends/family," "creativity") and then ranked them in order of personal importance. None of the items listed pertained to social-political issues or national identity. The affirmation versus threat to follow, accordingly, was unrelated to the attitude issue that would figure in the second of the two tasks the participants would undertake. (Consistent with this assertion, none of the essays concerned politics, patriotism, or 9/11.)

Participants assigned to the affirmation condition were instructed to "describe a time when your #1 personal characteristic or life domain (as ranked on the previous page) was important to you, and explain why this characteristic or life domain is meaningful to you." Participants assigned to the threat condition, by contrast, were instructed to "describe a time when you failed to live up to your #1 personal characteristic or life domain." Each participant was left in the room alone and had approximately 10–15 min to write the required essay.

When this initial task had been completed, participants were instructed to begin the second study. The identity salience variable was manipulated by a self-report questionnaire. The items on the questionnaire dealt either with the personal importance of standing up for one's beliefs and values (convictions salient condition) or with the personal importance of being rational (rationality salient condition). Each questionnaire contained nine similarly worded items that used qualifiers to make agreement easy (Salancik & Conway, 1975). In the convictions salient condition, sample items included, "At least once in a while, I try to stand up for my values" and "Sometimes it's important to be passionate about what you believe in." By contrast, in the rationality salient condition, sample items included, "At least once in a while, I try to look at things objectively" and "Sometimes it is important to be rational about what you believe in." Responses were made on separate scales ranging from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 10 (*strongly agree*).<sup>2</sup> As expected, participants expressed high levels of agreement with the items ( $M = 8.20, SD = 1.09$ ), and this did not vary by condition ( $F_s < 1.6, p_s > .22$ ).

*Persuasive report.* Next, participants reviewed the persuasive report, a fabricated two-page article titled "Beyond the Rhetoric: Understanding the Recent Terrorist Attacks in Context," which claimed that Islamic terrorism could be understood in terms of the social and economic forces operating in the Middle East. The report contended that aspects of U.S. foreign policy had played an important role in fostering the conditions in the Middle East that culminated in the September 11 terrorist attacks. Drawn from the writings of several prominent analysts, buttressed with factual evidence and historical analyses, the report cogently outlined ways in which America's "short-sighted" economic and political policies in the Middle East had contributed to the oppression and sense of disenfranchisement that breed terrorism. It was claimed that Islamic fundamentalism had grown in popularity because it offered

<sup>2</sup> In a pilot study aimed at validating this manipulation, 21 students were first randomly assigned to fill out one of the two questionnaires used in the salience manipulation and then completed manipulation checks. One set of manipulation checks tapped self-perceived rationality, that is, how much respondents rated themselves as "the type of person who tries to be rational" and as trying "to base your beliefs on a cool-headed analysis of the facts" ( $\alpha = .72$ ). The second set tapped self-perceived ideological conviction, that is, how much respondents rated themselves as "the type of person who tries to live up to your values" and as basing their "decisions primarily on principles and values" ( $\alpha = .90$ ). The ideological conviction check showed no effect of condition, perhaps because of a ceiling effect ( $M = 7.86, SD = 1.24$ ; 0 = *not at all*, 10 = *very much*). As we had hoped, however, respondents rated themselves as higher on the rationality manipulation check if they had completed the rationality salient questionnaire ( $M = 8.07, SD = 0.80$ ) rather than the convictions salient questionnaire ( $M = 6.61, SD = 1.40$ ),  $t(19) = 2.90, p < .01$ .

a sense of meaning and control to an otherwise subjugated populace. To heighten the sense that the report was the work of a critic of U.S. policy, it was purported to have been written by an author of Arab descent, "Babek Hafezi."

### Dependent Measures

**Openness to report.** After reading the report, participants completed the dependent measure questionnaire assessing biased assimilation. Participants were asked to rate how "convincing" and "valid" they found the report, and how "reasonable," "objective," "intelligent," "informed," and "biased" they found its author. They were also asked to assess the validity of the following specific claims in the report: (a) that "the United States played a role in fostering the conditions that led to the recent terrorist attacks," (b) that "there would be less impoverishment among Muslims in the Middle East today if the U.S. had helped the region use its resources to support the economic development of its entire populace," and (c) that "embracing fundamentalism offers the populace of Islamic countries a structured way of taking action." Each item featured a 9-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *moderately*, 9 = *a great deal*). The 10 ratings were averaged (with the bias item reverse-coded) to provide a composite measure of openness ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

**Measures of potential mechanism.** Additional items were included to explore potential mechanisms underlying the impact of the experimental manipulations (Cacioppo, Petty, Kao, & Rodriguez, 1986; Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994; Cohen, 2003; Fleming & Petty, 2000). Issue importance was assessed with the item, "How important is the issue of problems in the Middle East to you?" Cognitive effort was assessed with two items: "How closely did you read the article?" and "How carefully did you try to read the details presented in the article?" ( $\alpha = .89$ ). An open-ended measure of cognitive/affective responses was assessed by providing participants with 3.5 min to "list all your thoughts and feelings—negative, positive, and neutral—about the article that you have just read." Participants were asked to code their own responses by indicating either a "+", "-", or "0" next to each thought and feeling depending on whether it was positive, negative, or neutral toward the article (Fleming & Petty, 2000). Depth of processing was computed by counting the total number of issue-relevant thoughts and feelings. Cognitive/affective valence or balance was computed by subtracting the number of negative thoughts and feelings directed at the report from the number of positive thoughts and feelings (after correcting obvious errors in the identified valence of those thoughts) and then dividing by the total number of thoughts and feelings.

Although previous research has found that affirmation tends to produce no effects on mood (e.g., Cohen et al., 2000; Fein & Spencer, 1997), it seemed desirable to measure this variable and control for any impact in analyses. Participants thus received written instructions to, "Take a moment to think about how you are feeling." Mood was then measured with the item "How would you describe your mood right now?" (1 = *extremely bad*, 5 = *neutral*, 9 = *extremely good*).

When they had completed all the relevant questionnaire items, participants were thanked for their time and debriefed. They were made aware of the fabricated nature of the report, and any questions they had about the study were answered.

## Results

### Preliminary Data Analysis

One participant did not complete the identity centrality questions in mass screening. This is reflected in the degrees of freedom reported for the relevant analyses. Analyses revealed no gender main effects or interaction effects relevant to our principle hypotheses in any study, and accordingly, this variable receives no further consideration.

Dependent measures were first examined in a series of 2 (convictions salient vs. rationality salient)  $\times$  2 (affirmation vs. threat) analyses of variance (ANOVAs) or analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs). Three covariates were considered: the semester in which the student participated (fall vs. spring), identity centrality, and level of knowledge. Preliminary analyses revealed that spring semester participants and high-knowledge participants deemed the issue as relatively more important. Analyses of issue importance thus included these variables as covariates. Analyses of openness and cognitive/affective balance included the two-item premeasure of patriotic identity as a covariate. The measure of mood showed no main effects or interaction effects ( $F_s < 1$ ); accordingly, this variable receives no further attention in Study 1.

### Openness

The predicted Salience  $\times$  Affirmation interaction was revealed,  $F(1, 38) = 4.62, p = .038, MSE = 1.20$  (see Figure 2). In the convictions salient condition, patriots rated the report more positively when affirmed (adjusted [adj.]  $M = 6.40$ ) than when threatened (adj.  $M = 5.22$ ),  $t(38) = 2.45, p = .019$ . No such difference was apparent in the rationality salient condition (adj.  $M = 5.70$  for affirmed participants vs. adj.  $M = 5.96$  for threatened participants,  $|t| < 1$ ). As in the pilot study, self-affirmation combined with the heightened salience of partisan identity produced the most openness.

Affirmed participants in the convictions salient condition not only evaluated the report more positively but also were more likely to accept its claims. We separately analyzed the three question-

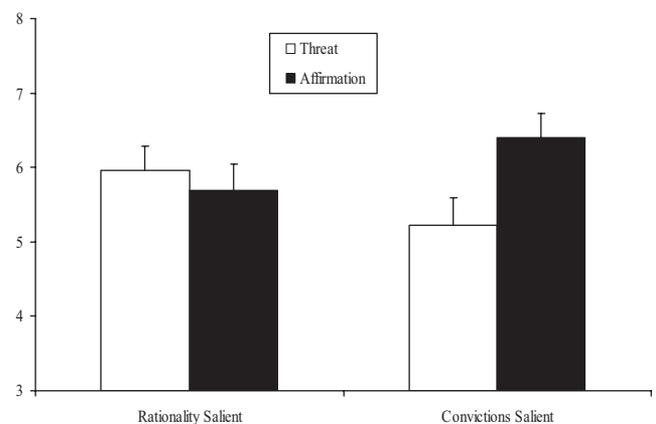


Figure 2. Mean openness to persuasive report (represented on the y axis) as a function of the two experimental manipulations: Study 1. Higher values represent greater openness. Error bars represent  $\pm 1$  standard errors.

naire items assessing agreement with specific claims made in the report. The same Salience  $\times$  Affirmation interaction was obtained,  $F(1, 38) = 5.47, p = .025, MSE = 2.14$ . In the convictions salient condition, patriots agreed more with the claims when affirmed (adj.  $M = 6.51$ ) than when threatened (adj.  $M = 5.17$ ),  $t(38) = 2.08, p = .044$ . By contrast, the groups did not differ in the rationality salient condition (adj.  $M_s = 5.38$  and  $6.14$ , respectively;  $|t| < 1.22, p > .22$ ).

### *Alternative Explanations and Additional Measures*

*Trivialization and/or depth of processing.* Self-affirmation did not make participants attach less importance to the issue addressed in the report. In the convictions salient condition, affirmed participants claimed to view that issue as more important (adj.  $M = 7.22$ ) than threatened participants (adj.  $M = 5.87$ ),  $t(37) = 2.22, p = .033$ . By contrast, affirmed and threatened participants in the rationality salient condition did not differ in the importance they attached to that issue (adj.  $M_s = 6.36$  and  $7.25$ , respectively;  $|t| < 1.6, p > .13$ ). The Salience  $\times$  Affirmation interaction was significant,  $F(1, 37) = 7.02, p = .012, MSE = 1.88$ . Thus, although self-affirmed individuals in the convictions salient condition proved uniquely open to identity-challenging ideas, they did not defensively denigrate the importance of the issue.

There was no evidence that affirmation decreased depth of processing (which in turn may have made participants less attentive to inconsistencies between the report's claims and their prior beliefs). Neither ratings of reported cognitive effort, nor tallies of the total number of thoughts and feelings generated, revealed any main effects or interactions involving affirmation (all  $F_s < 1.8, p_s > .18$ ). Indeed, in absolute terms, cognitive effort was high regardless of condition (on the 1–9 scale,  $M = 7.23, SD = 1.10$ ; total thoughts,  $M = 5.60, SD = 2.38$ ).

For the measure of cognitive and affective balance, the relevant Salience  $\times$  Affirmation condition interaction proved significant,  $F(1, 38) = 9.69, p = .004, MSE = 0.21$ . Repeated measures analysis, with proportion of positive versus negative thoughts and feelings as a within-subjects measure, also yielded the expected interaction between measure, salience, and affirmation,  $F(1, 38) = 9.69, p = .004, MSE = 0.10$ . In the convictions salient condition, affirmed patriots displayed more positive relative to negative thoughts and feelings directed at the report (adj.  $M = .17$ ) than did threatened patriots (adj.  $M = -.40$ ),  $t(38) = 2.83, p = .007$ . By contrast, in the rationality salient condition, affirmed and threatened patriots did not differ (adj.  $M_s = -.24, .06$ , respectively;  $|t| < 1.6, p > .12$ ).

*Investigation of potential moderators.* Two possible moderator variables, obtained in pretesting, were self-rated knowledge and identity centrality. In the case of issue knowledge, no main or interaction effects of interest were found ( $F_s < 1.5, p_s > .23$ ). In the case of identity centrality, however, theoretically consistent findings were obtained. We had expected that the threat posed by the report, and hence participants' responsiveness to the affirmation, would be heightened to the extent that their American identity was central to their sense of self-integrity. To test this prediction, we created contrast codes for affirmation condition (threat =  $-1$ , affirmation =  $+1$ ) and for identity salience condition (rationality salient =  $-1$ , convictions salient =  $+1$ ) and standardized the identity centrality measure. To isolate the independent effect of

identity centrality from that of identity extremity (i.e., level of patriotism), with which it proved highly correlated,  $r = .58, p < .001$  (see Zuwerink & Devine, 1996), we controlled for the latter and regressed openness on each of the predictors and the theoretically relevant two-way interactions.

Replicating our ANOVA results for the measure of openness, the Salience  $\times$  Affirmation interaction proved significant,  $t(35) = 2.49, p = .018$ . The expected Identity Centrality  $\times$  Affirmation interaction was also significant,  $t(35) = -2.08, p = .045$ . Among participants high in identity centrality (1 standard deviation above the relevant mean), those who were affirmed proved more open to the report ( $M = 6.48$ ) than those who were threatened ( $M = 5.35$ ),  $t(35) = -2.37, p = .024$ . By contrast, among participants low in identity centrality (1 standard deviation below the mean), those who were affirmed did not differ from those who were threatened ( $M_s = 5.57$  and  $5.86$ , respectively;  $t < 1$ ). In summary, analogous results were obtained for both an individual difference measure of identity salience as well as a manipulated one. Although sample size limited statistical power, we tested the three-way interaction between identity centrality, identity salience, and affirmation; no hint of an interaction was found ( $t < 1$ ). The latter result suggests that participants high in identity centrality were relatively more responsive to affirmation regardless of identity salience condition.

### *Discussion*

Like the pilot study, Study 1 showed that the effect of self-affirmation in increasing openness to a counterattitudinal communication was moderated by a manipulation that heightened (or failed to heighten) the salience of the challenge to identity and self-integrity posed by that communication. In this study, the salience manipulation was accomplished simply by having participants endorse questionnaire items relating to the goal of standing up for one's convictions versus items relating to the goal of displaying rationality.

Affirmation did not distract people from identity-threatening information or from its significance but encouraged more balanced processing (Reed & Aspinwall, 1998). We found no evidence of a role for distraction, shallow processing, positive mood, or trivialization of the attitude issue. The combination of affirmation and heightened salience of personal convictions promoted relatively less negativity and more balance in thoughts and feelings directed at the communication. It also prompted a greater recognition of the importance of the persuasive issue.

Additionally, participants who reported that being American was relatively central to their sense of self-worth proved, paradoxically, more open to affirmation-induced change than those who had asserted that being American was peripheral to their self-worth (see also Correll et al., 2004). Individual differences in chronic identity salience showed the same moderating effect as situational differences in identity salience.

The next two studies extended our analysis beyond bias in the processing of probative information to the offering and accepting of necessary concessions in the context of negotiation. The participants in these studies, all of whom identified themselves as strongly pro-choice in the abortion debate, were asked to play the role of a Democratic legislator trying to negotiate compromises on a Republican bill that would introduce new restrictions on women seeking to terminate a pregnancy. Once again, our concern was the

conditions under which self-affirmation could facilitate openness in identity-challenging contexts.

## Study 2

Insofar as situational cues focus disputants on their commitment to a cause rather than on the importance of seeking an outcome that pragmatically addresses their interests, negotiation outcomes are apt to be suboptimal (De Dreu & Carnevale, 2003). Our analysis suggests that in such a context, self-affirmation decreases defensiveness and other psychological barriers to dispute resolution (Arrow, Mnookin, Ross, Tversky, & Wilson, 1995; Ross & Ward, 1995; Ward, Atkins, & Lepper, 2005) and facilitates compromise.

Participants in Study 2 took part in a face-to-face negotiation with a real person whom they believed to be an opposing partisan on an issue about which they cared deeply (but in fact was a confederate playing the role of an ideological adversary, offering arguments and proposals that were equivalent across experimental conditions). Concession-making behavior and interpersonal perceptions could thus be measured in a dynamic negotiation. The study also introduced a salience manipulation akin to the ones featured in the two previous studies. In one condition (the convictions salient condition), participants were induced to articulate their “true beliefs” before facing the negotiation task. In the other (convictions nonsalient condition) participants were left free to focus on the explicit demands of the experimental task, including shielding their constituents from the costs of failing to reach agreement and seeing a more restrictive law enacted without alteration. This study thus contrasts a condition in which the salience of identity-relevant beliefs was heightened and a control condition in which there was no such salience and in which, instead, participants could focus on the pragmatic costs of intransigence.

We predicted that participants would make more concessions to the opposing partisan during the negotiation in the self-affirmation condition than in the no affirmation (threat) condition but that this effect would be more pronounced among negotiators in the convictions salient condition than in the convictions nonsalient condition.

## Method

### Participants and Design

Study 2 featured a 2 (affirmation vs. threat)  $\times$  2 (convictions salient vs. convictions nonsalient) factorial design. A total of 35 undergraduates (29 women and 6 men) participated in this study, for which they received credit toward an introductory psychology course. Only pro-choice participants were recruited because of the small pool of potential pro-life participants. All had indicated a strongly pro-choice stance on an earlier multitopic questionnaire by checking either a 6 or a 7 on 7-point scales that asked them to indicate both their attitude regarding the legality and regulation of abortion (1 = *strongly pro-life*, 4 = *ambivalent/undecided*, 7 = *strongly pro-choice*;  $M = 6.80$ ,  $SD = 0.41$ ) and the personal importance of their attitude in the abortion debate (1 = *not at all important*, 7 = *extremely important*;  $M = 6.03$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ).

### Procedure

After arriving at the laboratory, the participant and a female confederate (who always appeared immediately after the partici-

pant) were greeted by the experimenter. Participants learned that they would take part in “two separate studies,” the first of which involved writing a personal essay, the second of which involved negotiating with the “other participant.”

*Affirmation versus threat manipulation.* After directing the confederate to a small room, the experimenter seated the participant at a table in a similar adjacent room. As in Study 1, the participant was instructed to write an essay either affirming a source of self-integrity unrelated to the issue that would figure in the second task (by describing behavior or experiences relevant to a top-ranked personal value) or threatening such a source (by describing an occasion on which he or she had hurt someone’s feelings or let someone down). After completing this essay, participants were asked to indicate their current mood using a 7-point scale ranging from  $-3$  (*extremely negative/unhappy*) to  $+3$  (*extremely positive/happy*).

*Introduction to the negotiation task.* The experimenter next gave participants, who were still isolated from the confederate, background material (dealing with state abortions laws and the reasons many pro-choice groups were concerned about such laws) to review in preparation for the forthcoming negotiation task. Written instructions were provided that further explained that they would play the role of “state legislators,” and that they would assume the role of a “Democratic Party legislator,” whereas their counterpart would assume the role of a “Republican Party legislator.” The political context was elaborated as follows:

Your state *currently has fairly liberal abortion laws* with few restrictions in place. However, a new bill, the Abortion Control Act, which would place a number of restrictions on abortions performed in the state, has recently been considered in the state legislature. This bill has passed in both the State Senate and the General Assembly, but each house passed a somewhat different version of the bill. You and the other participant are part of a conference committee convened to resolve the differences between the two versions of the bill. Together, you must try to agree on a final version of the bill, which will then be put to a final vote in both houses of the legislature.

Participants then read the text of the proposed abortion bill. It included six separate, appropriately labeled sections covering the bill’s statement of legislative intent and its provisions regarding spousal notification and consent, parental notification and consent, and a mandatory waiting period, along with exposure to state-prepared informational materials, restrictions regarding late-term abortions, and restrictions on use of public funds, facilities, and employees. Each section offered a range of implementation options that varied in the severity of the restrictions they would impose. (For example, in negotiating the late-term abortions section of the bill, negotiators had to decide both whether to restrict abortions during the third trimester of pregnancy and what exceptions, if any, should be made in cases of rape or incest or in cases in which the life or health of the mother might be at risk.) Participants were instructed that their task was to come to an agreement with the other participant regarding the available options pertaining to each of the six sections of the bill. They were also given the following warning designed to make explicit the potential pragmatic costs of failure to reach agreement:

If you *fail* to reach a *complete agreement*, that means that your conference committee will be dissolved, and the bill will be sent to an entirely new conference committee. Given the makeup of the current

legislature, this new conference committee is likely (although not certain) to be rather conservative and, therefore, to agree on a bill that is restrictive vis-à-vis abortion access and thereby unfavorable to the pro-choice position.

Thus, from the perspective of pro-choice participants, failure to reach agreement could lead to an outcome even more restrictive than one reached through negotiated compromise.

*Saliency of convictions manipulation.* After reading the introductory materials but before beginning their negotiation session, participants randomly assigned to the convictions salient condition were asked to fill out a "True Beliefs Form," on which they were told, "We are interested in knowing what you *truly* believe should be included in or excluded from the Abortion Control Act, independent of the ultimate negotiation stance you adopt." They were further instructed to indicate, via checkmarks, what they would include in the bill if they had "complete control over it and did not have to negotiate with another committee member." They were assured that their "Republican" counterpart would not see this list of their true beliefs. Participants assigned to the convictions non-salient condition were not presented with this form or otherwise induced to recognize the tension between their personal views and the political compromises that they might have to make to reach agreement in the forthcoming negotiation task.

*Negotiation procedure.* All participants began the negotiation session by filling out an "Initial Proposal Form." This form was identical to the True Beliefs Form that had been completed by participants in the convictions salient condition, but it instructed participants to check not their personal beliefs or preferences but rather the opening proposal they chose to offer to their Republican counterpart. After the participant's initial proposal had been completed, the experimenter brought the confederate into the participant's room and seated her across the table from the participant. The negotiation began with an exchange of Initial Proposal Forms. The options checked on the form presented to the participant by the confederate were identical across the four conditions, proposing in each case the most severe restrictions for each of the six provisions of the bill to be negotiated.

The negotiation process that followed provided an opportunity for the two parties to resolve discrepancies between their initially very different proposals. During the negotiation, the confederate (who was unaware of participants' condition) presented arguments, responded to participants' contentions with counterarguments, and offered a few limited concessions, following a standard script. The confederate had been instructed to make as few concessions as possible. However, she was allowed to make approximately one or two prespecified concessions for each section of the bill to maintain verisimilitude or prevent a total stalemate. In most cases, the confederate made a concession only if the participant had compromised with respect to another, related aspect of the bill. Before making any concession, however, the confederate always began by offering an argument explaining why the participant should accept the provision she advocated. The confederate was trained to be well-prepared and armed with strong and thoughtful arguments drawn from the pro-life movement. For example, in dealing with the parental notification and consent provision, she argued, "Children under 18 need their parents' permission to get their ears pierced and to get tattoos. Why shouldn't they need permission to have an abortion?"

After the participant and confederate had been negotiating for 10 min, the experimenter interrupted and asked them to take a few more minutes to finish and then to fill out a "Final Agreement Form" (which was similar to the Initial Proposal Form except that it included two columns in which each of the two negotiators indicated the outcome of their negotiation on each issue). The specific instructions read as follows:

For sections you both were able to agree on, the two columns should have *identical check marks*. For sections you were *not* able to agree on, you should each make check marks indicating *what you would be willing to settle for* if you could get the other committee member to agree.

Thus, in cases in which full agreement had not been reached, the pro-choice participant was asked to indicate the most restrictive version of the bill to which he or she would have agreed if the confederate had been willing to compromise further. Both negotiators were required to sign the form before handing it to the experimenter to end the session.

*Postnegotiation questionnaire.* After completing the negotiation, the participant and confederate were escorted into separate rooms and the participant was asked to fill out a questionnaire evaluating the "other committee member" (who, presumably, would be doing the same thing in the other room). Participants were asked (a) how valid and convincing they found the confederate's arguments, (b) how similar they thought the confederate's social and political views were to their own, (c) how easy it would be to work with the confederate on a campus committee dealing with an issue unrelated to abortion, (d) how much they thought the confederate was influenced by biases resulting from self-interest or political ideology, and (e) how much they thought the confederate was influenced by appropriate moral and ethical considerations. All five ratings were made on appropriately labeled 7-point scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). After the bias item was reverse coded, the items were averaged into a composite ( $\alpha = .59$ ), with higher values representing more favorable evaluations.

Finally, participants were debriefed about the confederate's role and about the hypothesized effects of the experimental manipulations on their negotiation behavior.

## Results

As in the previous two studies, there was no effect of affirmation on self-reported mood ( $F < 1.3$ ,  $p > .27$ ). The two-item premeasure of participants' abortion attitudes was used as a covariate. Because the mood measure preceded the manipulation of identity salience, it could appropriately be used as a covariate. We thus controlled for self-reported mood to isolate the effect of affirmation above and beyond mood effects. (Excluding mood from analysis slightly weakens reported results, but the predicted interaction and contrasts remain statistically significant.)

### Concession Making

The number of concessions made by each participant was tallied by comparing the Final Agreement Forms with Initial Proposal Forms. (There were no effects on the initial proposals,  $F_s < 1$ .) Every additional restriction agreed to by the participant on the final form was counted as a concession. For example, the parental

notification and consent section of the bill included separate provisions for notification and consent. If a participant checked neither of these provisions on the initial proposal but checked both of them on the final agreement, the change would be treated as two concessions. The mean number of concessions in each of the four conditions is shown in Figure 3. The predicted interaction between the two manipulations was significant,  $F(1, 29) = 8.03, p = .008, MSE = 4.80$ . In the case of participants in the convictions salient condition, those in the self-affirmation condition offered more concessions (adj.  $M = 7.43$ ) than those in the threat condition (adj.  $M = 3.94$ ),  $t(29) = 3.28, p = .003$ . By contrast, participants in the convictions nonsalient condition offered an equal number of concessions regardless of whether they were affirmed (adj.  $M = 4.45$ ) or threatened (adj.  $M = 5.56; t < 1$ ).

### Evaluation of the Confederate

Evaluations of the confederate showed the same pattern as concession making, with the interaction statistically significant,  $F(1, 29) = 5.79, MSE = 0.48, p = .023$ . In the convictions salient condition, participants viewed the confederate more favorably when affirmed (adj.  $M = 4.89$ ) than when threatened (adj.  $M = 3.82$ ),  $t(29) = 3.17, p = .004$ . By contrast, in the convictions nonsalient condition, participants offered similar evaluations of the confederate regardless of whether they previously had been affirmed (adj.  $M = 4.03$ ) or threatened (adj.  $M = 4.20; |t| < 1$ ).

### Discussion

In Study 2, affirming (vs. threatening) an alternative source of self-integrity affected actual negotiation behavior but only when the negotiator's personal beliefs and the potential costs of compromise in terms of the identity tied to those beliefs had been made salient. In the convictions salient condition, affirmed participants found it easier, or at least less disagreeable, to compromise on their initial demands than did the participants who were threatened (see also Ward et al., 2005). The combination of self-affirmation and heightened identity salience led to more open-mindedness than did

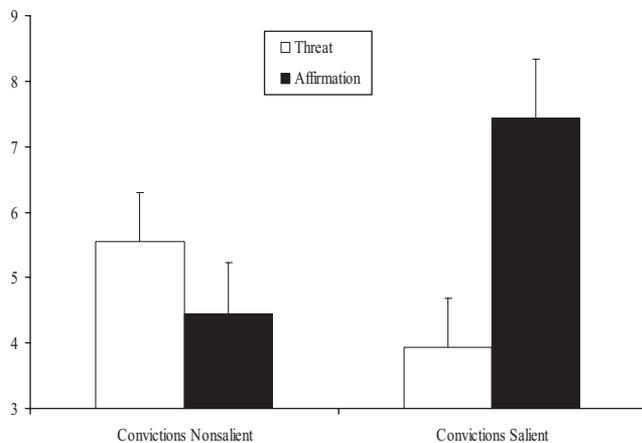


Figure 3. Mean number of concessions made by participants (represented on the y axis) in each of the four conditions: Study 2. Error bars represent +1/-1 standard errors.

the same affirmation manipulation in the absence of heightened identity salience.

The results from Study 1 suggested that affirmation does not reduce the personal importance of the attitude issue to participants. In that study, affirmation increased the rated importance of the issue. Rather, what affirmation seems to reduce is the importance of getting one's way. Affirmed participants in Study 2 may have found it more acceptable to make concessions rather than face a deadlock and see the abortion bill passed, without changes, to a conservative, pro-life committee.

In the condition that prompted the most concessions, the confederate was seen as least biased, most ethical, and easiest to work with. We suspect that self-affirmation made participants more charitable in their attributions regarding the modest compromises they were offered and more inclined to see them as attempts to find common ground rather than exercises in hard-ball negotiation (Morris, Larrick, & Su, 1999; see also Sherman & Kim, 2005). In a world where the maintenance of long-term relationships can prove more important than the outcome of a single negotiation, such attributional charity could have long-term benefits for intergroup relations (Cohen et al., 2006; Rubin, Pruitt, & Kim, 1994; Sheppard, 1995; Sherman & Cohen, 2006).<sup>3</sup>

### Study 3

Study 3 sought to further clarify our contentions about the importance of heightened identity salience in determining the impact of self-affirmation on openness to counterattitudinal information and courses of action. Specifically, the study was based on a distinction, alluded to previously, between situations where the identity made salient is one for which openness or lack of openness has clear implications for the individual and situations in which the salient identity is one for which neither openness nor lack of openness is of obvious relevance.

Consider the case of a pro-choice partisan negotiating with a pro-life adversary over abortion legislation. To the extent that the identity made salient for the individual involves rationality or pragmatism, either acceptance or rejection of counterattitudinal arguments and proposals (depending on their perceived quality) is potentially quite consistent with that identity. If pro-choice partisans are swayed by compelling arguments to limit abortion access, they will continue to feel rational. Indeed, they would most likely attribute their willingness to accept those arguments to their own rational appraisal of them. If they are not swayed, they will attribute their failure to change positions to the weakness of the

<sup>3</sup> In the negotiation exercise used in Study 2, legislative points for one side were accrued at the expense of the other. As a result, the exercise offered little possibility for pure integrative solutions, that is, creative settlements of mutual benefit. Nevertheless, integrative problem solving was possible. Participants could selectively compromise on legislative issues that they perceived to be of greater importance to their adversary than to themselves. A question for future inquiry involves examining the effect of affirmation on integrative problem solving, that is, negotiators' ability to identify creative agreements that fulfill both parties' interests to a greater extent than a 50-50 compromise would (De Dreu, Weingart, & Kwon, 2000). Insofar as integrative problem solving requires mutual trust and willingness to compromise, it may be facilitated by self-affirmation (see also Rubin et al., 1994; De Dreu et al., 2000).

arguments and thus similarly continue to feel rational. Thus, when the ideal of rationality is salient, we suggest, self-affirmation should have no impact on individuals' open-mindedness versus closed-mindedness. That is, regardless of whether they accept or reject counterattitudinal arguments and proposals, their identity as a rational actor is not threatened and thus has no need for (and accordingly is not influenced by) such buffering. This account is consistent with the null effect of self-affirmation observed under conditions of rationality salience and pragmatism salience in the previous studies.

Contrast this situation with one in which the individual's identity as a partisan is made salient. If pro-choice partisans find themselves open to pro-life arguments and proposals, that openness would clearly pose a potential threat to their pro-choice identity. Accordingly, to the extent that this aspect of social-political identity is salient, self-affirmation in some other domain of identity should buffer the threat posed by the pro-life information and allow the partisans to show greater openness than would otherwise be the case. This account is consistent with the debiasing effect of self-affirmation observed under conditions in which individuals' partisan identity or partisan-related convictions were made salient.

Now contrast both of the situations described above with one in which the identity made salient involves neither adherence to a particular political position (i.e., support of abortion) nor rational discernment and decision making but instead the ideal of being open-minded and cooperative. Under such circumstances, pro-choice partisans who find themselves dismissive of pro-life arguments and proposals face an identity threat. For them, our buffering, self-affirmation manipulation should lessen the threat posed by their reflexive rejection of arguments or proposals from the other side and accordingly leave them freer to engage in such rejection.

This analysis motivated the design of Study 3. A new identity salient condition, heightening the importance of open-mindedness and compromise, was contrasted to one heightening the importance of commitment to political convictions. In the terminology of dual concern theory (Rubin et al., 1994), the new condition highlighted prosocial goals, that is, desires to maximize collective outcomes. Under most conditions, prosocial goals motivate relatively more openness and concession making (De Dreu et al., 2000; Deutsch, 1973; Liberman et al., 2004). We expected affirmation to increase compromise in the condition that heightened the importance of commitment to a political cause (as in the convictions salient condition in Study 2) but to decrease compromise in the condition that heightened the importance of compromise with one's adversary.

## Method

### Participants and Design

Study 3 featured a 2 (affirmation vs. threat)  $\times$  2 (commitment focus vs. compromise focus) factorial design. A total of 39 undergraduates (14 men and 25 women) participated in the study for which they received course credit in an introductory psychology course. Pro-choice students were again recruited for the study, although (because of the small pool of potential participants) selection criteria were loosened somewhat relative to those used in

Study 2. All participants had indicated on an earlier multitopic questionnaire that they were pro-choice on the abortion issue by checking either 5, 6, or 7 on the relevant 7-point scale ( $M = 6.41$ ,  $SD = .68$ ), and virtually all had checked at least a 4 on the 7-point scale pertaining to the personal importance of their attitude in the abortion debate ( $M = 5.36$ ,  $SD = 1.81$ ).

### Procedure

*Manipulation of affirmation versus threat.* The task used to manipulate self-affirmation versus threat was undertaken in the context of a larger questionnaire completed at the outset of the study. All participants wrote about the personal value of kindness, a domain that is important to college students and one that has been used as an affirmation topic in previous research (Reed & Aspinwall, 1998). In the affirmation condition, participants wrote about a time when they had "made someone feel good with something you said or did, or . . . when you helped or supported someone who needed you." In the threat condition, they wrote about a time when they had "hurt someone else's feelings, or . . . when you let down someone who was counting on you." An item was included to assess the effects of this manipulation on mood, with the relevant scale ranging from  $-3$  (*extremely negative/unhappy*) to  $+3$  (*extremely positive/happy*).

Participants then considered a hypothetical negotiation scenario, the same one that had been used in Study 2. Participants thus read background information about the concerns of pro-choice organizations and were instructed to "play the role of a state legislator" in support of the pro-choice position. The bill under consideration and the political context in which it was to be negotiated were described in the same manner as they had been in Study 2. Participants in the present study were asked to imagine that they were going to negotiate with a pro-life legislator.

*Manipulation of identity salience: Focus on importance of partisan commitment versus compromise.* Before proceeding to consider the potential provisions of the bill, participants were led to focus on their identity either as "committed partisans" or as "cooperative negotiators." We primed each of these identities and their associated motives using instructions prior to the negotiation task (De Dreu et al., 2000; Deutsch, 1973). Thus, participants in the commitment focus condition read the following:

When you are preparing to engage in a negotiation like this one, it is important to take some time to think about your position and what matters to you. We find that people who do best in situations like this are those who can stand up for what they believe in and think is important.

By contrast, participants in the compromise focus condition read the following:

When you are preparing to engage in a negotiation like this one, it is important to take some time to think about what matters to the other party and how you can come up with a compromise solution that will work reasonably well for both of you. We find that people who do best in situations like this one are those who can adopt the other party's perspective and make reasonable compromises when necessary.

*Dependent measure.* Participants were asked to imagine that they were going to negotiate with the pro-life legislator and to suppose that at the start of the negotiation they and the other

legislator had to exchange proposals “regarding which options you each would like to include” in the bill. Then they provided their proposals as they had in Study 2. Because no actual negotiation ensued, our primary dependent measure was simply the number of restrictions on abortion access that participants indicated a willingness to accept on this first Proposal Form.<sup>4</sup>

## Results and Discussion

### Preliminary Analyses

In contrast to the three previous studies, participants reported more positive mood in the affirmation condition ( $M = 0.82$ ) than in the threat condition ( $M = -0.51$ ),  $F(1, 35) = 9.80$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $MSE = 1.71$ . Subsequent analyses controlled for mood (which, as noted previously, was assessed prior to the identity salience manipulation) as well as for the two-item premeasure of prior beliefs by using an ANCOVA.

### Concession Making

The mean number of restrictions on abortion allowed by participants revealed the predicted Identity Salience  $\times$  Affirmation interaction,  $F(1, 33) = 8.98$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $MSE = 7.17$ . In the commitment focus condition, participants made more concessions in the affirmation condition (adj.  $M = 10.23$ ) than in the threat condition (adj.  $M = 8.05$ ). This effect proved to be only marginally significant with a two-tailed test,  $t(33) = 1.69$ ,  $p = .10$ , but because the relevant prediction had been confirmed in the three prior experiments, the use of a one-tailed test ( $p = .05$ ) could readily be justified. By contrast, in the new compromise focus condition, participants made fewer concessions when an alternative identity had been affirmed (adj.  $M = 7.91$ ) rather than threatened (adj.  $M = 11.11$ ),  $t(33) = 2.74$ ,  $p = .01$ .

In summary, as in Studies 1 and 2, self-affirmation reduced intransigence when participants focused on their identity as committed partisans. However, it led to more intransigence when participants focused on their identity as cooperative negotiators. Although affirmation had opposite effects in each of the two salience conditions, its effects were similar at the conceptual level. In both conditions, affirmation made people less beholden to a situationally salient identity.

## General Discussion

Three assumptions based on earlier research underlie the work reported here. The first is that people resist information and also potentially pragmatic compromises in negotiation that pose a threat to a valued identity and sense of self-integrity (Cohen et al., 2000; De Dreu & Carnevale, 2003; Jacks & O'Brien, 2004; Kunda, 1990; Reed & Aspinwall, 1998; Sherman et al., 2000; Sherman & Cohen, 2006). The second assumption is that situational cues can affect the degree to which an identity is psychologically salient, and as a consequence, important to self-integrity in a given context or at a given time (Ellemers et al., 1997; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Oakes et al., 1994). The third assumption is that there is a degree of fungibility or substitutability in sources of self-integrity, such that bolstering one's sense of self-integrity in one domain increases one's ability to endure threats in another, different domain (Steele, 1988; see also Sherman & Cohen, 2006).

The present studies showed that a self-affirmation unrelated to an identity challenged by a counterattitudinal communication or divisive negotiation decreases bias and increases open-mindedness to the communication and to pragmatic negotiation compromise. But this benefit of identity buffering proved greatest in (and in some studies was restricted to) situations that heightened the salience of either identity-relevant beliefs or the individual's more general identity as someone who stands his or her ground. Indeed, it was the combination of heightened identity salience and self-affirmation in a domain irrelevant to that identity that prompted the most open-mindedness and compromise of any condition.

### Summary of Specific Findings and Implications

Both an initial pilot study and Study 1 showed that affirmation of an alternative source of self-integrity (created by recalling an occasion in which one lived up to an important value unrelated to a persuasive communication) resulted in greater openness to counterattitudinal arguments about U.S. foreign policy and greater resistance to proattitudinal arguments than did a threat to self-integrity. But the benefit of such buffering occurred only when situational cues heightened the salience of participants' national identity rather than the salience of the desideratum or goal of showing rationality. The results of Study 1 further showed that a dispositional measure of identity salience—the reported centrality of national identity to participants' self-integrity—also moderated the effect of the affirmation. Thus, measured identity salience and manipulated identity salience similarly moderated the effect of self-affirmation.

Study 2 provided a rare look at the effects of affirmation processes on negotiation behavior (see also Ward et al., 2005). The self-affirmation increased the willingness of pro-choice partisans to make pragmatically necessary concessions (lest even greater restrictions on abortion access be enacted in the absence of a negotiated agreement) and made them more trusting of their negotiation partners; but once again, this effect was moderated by the presence versus absence of a prior task heightening the salience of the issue vis-à-vis their personal identity.

Study 3 added further weight to the present conceptual analysis by explicating circumstances under which affirmation could make partisans less willing to offer pragmatic concessions. Affirmed participants became less willing to offer such concessions in situations that heightened the salience not of their identity as partisans of a cause but rather of their identity as open-minded, cooperative negotiators. Consistent with the results of Study 2, self-affirmation increased concession making among participants who had been reminded of the importance of remaining faithful to

<sup>4</sup> An ecologically more relevant measure of flexibility would, of course, be the one used in Study 2, that is, participants' ultimate willingness to accept concessions following negotiation rather than their willingness to see a more restrictive measure enacted at the outset of negotiation. However, there was no actual negotiation in Study 3 and hence no second measure of concession making. In this respect, the initial proposal in Study 3 was psychologically equivalent to the final proposal. Participants knew that there would be no actual negotiation and that their first proposal would thus be their final one. By contrast, participants in Study 2 gave their first proposals knowing that there would be both a negotiation and a subsequent opportunity to revise their initial proposal.

their convictions. But the same manipulation had the opposite effect among participants who had been reminded of the importance of remaining open to compromise. In short, across all of our studies, self-affirmation freed people to act and think in ways that deviated from the particular challenged identity made salient in the situation.

It is of further theoretical relevance that the self-affirmation manipulation used in the present research and the identity buffering it provided exerted no effect on open-mindedness or willingness to compromise in situations heightening the importance of being rational and pragmatic. This lack of impact of self-affirmation, we argue, reflects the fact that the identity-relevant goal of demonstrating rationality (in contrast with that of demonstrating one's ideological fidelity or of demonstrating one's open-mindedness and flexibility) is not necessarily compromised either by accepting counterattitudinal arguments or by rejecting them. Both responses are consistent with one's identity as a rational individual, provided that such acceptance or rejection is perceived to be warranted by the quality of those arguments.

The pragmatic implication of the latter finding is worth emphasizing. It suggests that rhetorical exhortations to be rational or accusations of irrationality may succeed in heightening the individuals' commitment to act in accord with his or her identity as a rational person but fail to facilitate open-mindedness and compromise. Indeed, if one's arguments or proposals are less than compelling, such appeals to rationality may be counterproductive. Simple pleas for open-mindedness, in the absence of addressing the identity stakes for the recipient of one's arguments and proposals, are similarly likely to be unproductive or even counterproductive. A better strategy, our findings suggest, would be to provide the recipient with a prior opportunity for self-affirmation in a domain irrelevant to the issue under consideration and then (counterintuitively) to heighten the salience of the recipient's partisan identity.

The results of Study 2 suggest further nonobvious implications, in this case for contexts in which committed and personally involved negotiators must decide whether to compromise or to face an even more unattractive alternative. Our findings suggest that in such circumstances the negotiation process may, paradoxically, be well-served by procedures that heighten rather than lessen the parties' focus on their political values, beliefs, and identity, provided that such procedures are accompanied by prior steps to make the negotiators' sense of self-integrity not depend solely on prevailing over the other party. We note, in this context, the practice of having participants in intergroup dialogues in the Middle East, Northern Ireland, and other sites of conflict begin by telling their personal stories. These stories explain that their participation in the dialogue arises not from a lack of identification with the frustrations and anger of their own side but rather from the conviction that the larger, long-term interests of their own group and their commitment to the well-being of future generations require that the hurting stalemate end. Our claim is not that these rituals inevitably increase rather than decrease participants' willingness to search for such common ground. Rather, it is that those who are motivated to achieve agreement seem to find it easier to proceed to the discussion of painful but pragmatically necessary compromises after having made it clear that they are doing so because of their strong identification with their side, coupled with the value they

place not on winning but on fulfilling their responsibilities and alternative identities as parents and grandparents.

### *Theoretical Implications*

Most theories of negotiation ascribe intransigence to incompatibility between the parties' interests and to various structural, strategic, and psychological barriers or limitations that prevent them from identifying and implementing mutually beneficial trade-offs (for reviews, see De Dreu & Carnevale, 2003; Mnookin & Ross, 1995). Our analysis suggests that although intransigence arises in part from identity needs, those needs may be contextually dependent (De Dreu & Carnevale, 2003; De Dreu et al., 2000; Rubin et al., 1994). That is, the personal meaning of openness (vs. intransigence) with respect to an identity-relevant issue, and its costliness in terms of feelings of personal integrity, depend on the particular identity (whether it be faithful adherent, open-minded pragmatist, or rational but skeptical information processor) that happens to be salient at the particular moment and in the particular context.

Another implication of our research concerns the situated nature of self-affirmation processes. In most prior research, self-affirmation manipulations of the sort featured in the present studies have generally been shown to exert uniform effects, reducing defensive biases and distortions. Consistent with social identity and self-categorization theories, however, the present studies found the effects of self-affirmation to depend on the particular identity made salient. Under conditions suggested by our conceptual analysis, we not only eliminated the typical effect of affirmation but reversed it. (See also Galinsky, Stone, & Cooper, 2000; Hoshino-Browne et al., 2005; McQueen & Klein, 2006; Stone & Cooper, 2001, for discussions of the limitations of self-affirmation.)

Finally, our results speak to the classic topic of motivation, more specifically, to the source of people's motivation to defend identity versus the motivation to be rational or to maintain cooperative relationships. The present findings highlight the extrinsic (Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett, 1973; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999) and ultimately fungible nature of such motives. Responses to information and the give-and-take of negotiation may be means to the end of serving self-integrity needs. To the extent that people achieve that end through alternative means (such as through self-affirmation), motivations to stand firm, to compete, or to cooperate decrease. Two important implications follow from this analysis. First, there are situations in which self-affirmation may result in suboptimal outcomes. Specifically, such affirmation is counterproductive in contexts in which the behavior that the actors are displaying to maintain self-integrity is constructive, for instance, compromising with an adversary to avoid being seen as closed-minded (as in Study 3) or pursuing academic- or work-related goals to maintain a sense of personal competence (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Second, there may be a subgroup of individuals—in particular, those whose intransigent or flexible behavior reflect a commitment to the achievement of an optimal outcome rather than an attempt to serve a goal related to identity maintenance—who are unaffected by affirmation.

### *Unanswered Questions and Limitations*

Previous studies (e.g., Cohen et al., 2000; Reed & Aspinwall, 1998; Sherman et al., 2000) have found debiasing effects of affirmation without introducing cues heightening the salience of the identity to be challenged. Such findings are seemingly at odds with the null effect of affirmation in our identity nonsalient conditions. The apparent discrepancy can be resolved by positing that although our identity salience conditions maintained or heightened concerns of identity maintenance, the nonsalience conditions we used actually lessened such concerns. The default state for partisans of a cause when encountering a communication or negotiation proposal relevant to that cause is likely to be one in which their partisan identity is salient and thus (in the absence of some form of identity buffering) promotive of resistance (De Dreu et al., 2000; Zuwerink & Devine, 1996). If, however, partisans are led to focus on being rational and analytical (as in the pilot study and Study 1) or to see a negotiation as an exercise in pragmatic problem solving (as in Study 2), they should become less concerned with protecting political identity. Consequently, they should display little if any buffering effect of affirmation (see also Epstein, 1994; Simon et al., 1997).

Additionally, affirmation effects occur most robustly among people for whom concerns of identity maintenance are salient because of dispositional if not situational factors. In Study 1, patriots who viewed their national identity as central to their self-integrity proved relatively more responsive to affirmation regardless of identity salience condition. Self-affirmed individuals in previous research proved less biased in their evaluations of argument quality only if their attitude was personally important and thus tied to their self-concept (Correll et al., 2004). Likewise, only people for whom a health message is personally relevant show affirmation-induced acceptance of that message (Sherman et al., 2000). In short, the debiasing impact of affirmation depends on identity salience, which can arise from either situational or dispositional factors.

One potential limitation of the reported studies is the absence of a pure salience control condition devoid of goal-related cues. However, a considerable body of research suggests that in situations lacking strong situational cues, individual differences predominate (Barry & Friedman, 1998; De Dreu & Carnevale, 2003; Kenrick & Funder, 1988). Rather than permit goals and motives to vary randomly in this manner, we put them under experimental control. In particular, Studies 1 and 2 contrasted a condition in which the salient goal motivated a directional bias on processing with a condition in which the salient goal discouraged such motivated processing (Chaiken et al., 1996; Chen et al., 1999).

Another potential limitation in our studies involves the possibility that affirmation simply distracted participants from the subsequent identity salience manipulation. In this regard, however, we note that the same predicted results were obtained in the pilot study, in which the critical element of the identity salience manipulation (the experimenter's U.S. flag pin vs. white lab coat) preceded the affirmation induction rather than followed it. Additionally, in the affirmation condition, the identity salience condition did, in fact, have an impact; that impact, however, was the reverse of that observed in the threat condition. In Studies 1 and 2, self-affirmed participants proved to be more open-minded (as assessed by a composite of the standardized openness and cogni-

tive/affective balance measures in Study 1 and the two outcome measures in Study 2) in the convictions salient condition than in the convictions nonsalient condition,  $t(38) = 2.20, p = .034$ , and  $t(29) = 3.52, p = .001$ , respectively. Also, in Study 3, self-affirmed participants made more concessions in the commitment focus condition than in the compromise focus condition,  $t(33) = 2.04, p = .049$ . Thus, there is little evidence that affirmation led people to disregard the identity salience manipulation.

Why did a focus on rationality or pragmatism alone prove a less effective debiasing strategy than the combination of identity salience and affirmation—the combination that, across all studies, proved the most effective at combating bias and closed-mindedness? Two accounts seem plausible. First, the goals of rationality and pragmatism may not fully discourage the application of prior beliefs. Because people assume their own beliefs to be more valid and objective than alternative beliefs (Armor, 1999; Lord et al., 1979; Pronin, Gilovich, & Ross, 2004; Ross & Ward, 1995), telling them to be rational may constitute a suggestion that they should continue to use their existing beliefs in evaluating the validity of new information (Lord, Lepper, & Preston, 1984). Second, making individuals' political identity or their identity-linked convictions salient may increase the perceived significance of the political issue under debate or negotiation. Because identities are tied to long-held values (Cohen, 2003; Turner, 1991), making those identities salient or relevant to an issue may elicit moral concern, at least when peoples' self-integrity no longer depends on prevailing over the other party. Indeed, in Study 1, heightened identity salience plus affirmation led participants to see the attitude issue as relatively more important. If involvement increases responsiveness to the objective merits of persuasive arguments (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), it may have prompted greater openness to the relatively strong arguments used in our research (cf. Correll et al., 2004).

Are self-affirmation effects likely to endure over time? Recent research examining effects of affirmation on academic performance suggests that they can (Cohen et al., 2006). To the extent that affirmation-induced belief change occurs through systematic or central-route processing—by promoting more balanced thoughts and feelings (as seemed to be the case in Study 1)—the prospects for enduring effects are promising (cf. Harris & Napper, 2005). Can we generalize results obtained using hypothetical negotiations of the sort used in many other studies (for example, De Dreu & Carnevale, 2003; Ross & Ward, 1995) to real negotiations with real stakes and stakeholders? Additional research featuring real negotiations would be optimal. Consistent with our present claims, however, Kelman (2006) has suggested that concerns of identity maintenance operate in real-world reconciliation. When parties in dispute believe that their adversaries accept both them and their collective narrative, they are more open to concessions on peripheral aspects of their identity.

Resistance to persuasion and to compromise can create misunderstandings, misattributions, and ill will. The same motivational processes that serve individuals well by enhancing their self-regard and optimism may serve those individuals and especially larger society poorly by impeding fruitful dialogue and the resolution of social conflict. In a real sense, people's efforts to protect self-integrity may threaten the integrity of their relationships with others. We hope that the research and conceptual analysis featured in this article will prove an impetus to the development of greater

understanding of these processes and more effective intervention strategies.

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