

# The Expulsion From Disneyland

## *The Social Psychological Impact of 9/11*

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*People expressed many different reactions to the events of September 11th, 2001. Some of these reactions were clearly negative, such as political intolerance, discrimination, and hate crimes directed toward targets that some, if not many, people associated with the attackers. Other reactions were more positive. For example, people responded by donating blood, increasing contributions of time and money to charity, and flying the American flag. The goal of this article is to review some of Americans' negative and positive reactions to 9/11. We also describe two frameworks, value protection and terror management theory, that provide insights into Americans' various reactions to the tragedy of 9/11.*

**Keywords:** September 11th, value protection theory, terror management theory

September 11th, 2001, began as a bright and clear late-summer morning. By the time the sun had set, a band of terrorists had crashed commercial airplanes into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a field in rural Pennsylvania, killing approximately 3,000 victims and vastly changing America's social and political landscape. Beatty (2002) observed that on this day, the American people "were expelled from Disneyland." The 9/11 attacks signaled the end of Americans' perceived invulnerability and freedom from worry that the United States could be the target of foreign terrorist attacks. In the 10 years since 9/11, Beatty's predictions have proven prescient. The 9/11 attacks have had far-reaching implications for life in the United States.

The goal of this article is to review some of those implications, with particular attention to the social psychological impact of 9/11. For example, Americans responded to 9/11 with a host of negative reactions, such as increased intolerance, discrimination, prejudice, and hate toward those who were symbolically associated with the attacks. Americans also responded with a number of positive and prosocial reactions, such as greater intentions to do nice things for friends and family, giving millions of dollars in charitable donations, and becoming more civically engaged. In this article, we document a number of the 9/11 attacks' negative and positive social psychological consequences. We then review value protection and terror management theories—two frameworks that provide psychological insights into the ways that people react to threats against their worldviews and therefore yield insights into

why Americans reacted as they did to the events of 9/11 (e.g., Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1999).

### **Negative Reactions to 9/11**

Americans responded to 9/11 with a number of negative reactions. Among other things, Americans expressed increased political intolerance, prejudice, discrimination, and desires for vengeance (as we discuss in more detail below). It is important to note, however, that Americans often targeted these reactions at groups who were not directly responsible for—but who shared some symbolic connections with—the 9/11 attackers. When offenders cannot be punished directly, people lash out against alternative targets that they perceive as similar in some key way to the original offender or offenders (a phenomenon known as displaced aggression; e.g., Pedersen, Gonzales, & Miller, 2000). For example, people who observe a serious crime respond with heightened punitiveness in subsequent, but unrelated judgments (Tetlock et al., 2007), especially when the original offender went unpunished (Goldberg, Lerner, & Tetlock, 1999; Lerner, Goldberg, & Tetlock, 1998). Because the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks died when the airplanes crashed and the architects of the attack had gone into hiding (e.g., bin Laden), Americans focused their negative reactions on available proxies for the 9/11 attackers. These negative reactions to 9/11 took (and perhaps continue to take) a number of different forms, including increased political intolerance of various ethnic and religious groups in the United States, a topic we turn to next.

### ***Diminished Civil Liberty and Political Intolerance***

Political tolerance refers to support for protecting the civil liberties and political freedoms of groups that one finds objectionable (i.e., support for the notion that even disliked

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groups are deserving of freedom of speech, freedom of association, rights to due process; Gibson, 2006; Sullivan, Piereson, & Marcus, 1982). After 9/11, Americans showed a greater willingness to trade their own civil liberties for security and greater support for denying civil liberties to groups perceived as proxies for the 9/11 attackers. For example, more than two thirds of Americans reported that they were willing to sacrifice some civil liberties to fight terrorism, and one in four thought that the Bush administration had not gone far enough to restrict civil liberties in the months immediately following the attacks (Etzioni, 2002; Huddy, Khatib, & Capelos, 2002). Moreover, more people were willing to trade civil liberties for greater security directly following the 9/11 attacks (55%) than in 1997 when no terrorist attacks had recently occurred (29%; Huddy et al., 2002; PEW Research Center, 2007). The willingness to trade civil liberties for security was especially strong among people who expressed high levels of trust in the government and worried that the United States would face additional terrorist attacks (e.g., Davis & Silver, 2004).

In addition to a generalized willingness to sacrifice civil liberties for greater security, Americans were and perhaps continue to be more intolerant of specific ethnic and religious groups symbolically associated with the attackers—something that has been especially true of those who experienced 9/11 as highly threatening. For example, the perception that future terrorist attacks were likely to occur predicted greater support for increasing surveillance of Arab Americans, such as allowing the government to monitor Arab and Arab Americans' phone and e-mail messages (Huddy, Feldman, Taber, & Lahav, 2005). Americans also voiced increased support after 9/11 for a host of restrictions on the civil rights of Arab Americans, Muslims, and first-generation immigrants, including tapping these groups' phone lines, requiring them to carry special identification, and allowing authorities to legally hold them without charging them with specific crimes (Skitka, Bauman, & Mullen, 2004). In short, one very clear consequence of the 9/11 attacks is that they undermined Americans' commitment to tolerance and political freedom.

Although overall support for civil liberties recovered to usual baseline levels within the year following the attacks (Huddy et al., 2002), political tolerance of specific groups that people symbolically connected with the attackers has not as clearly recovered. For example, a 2006 poll found that 31% of Americans supported the idea that Muslims should be made to carry a national ID card, and 41% supported more intensive security checks for Muslims at airports (Saad, 2006). Furthermore, support for the notion that Americans continue to feel decreased political tolerance for Muslim groups is evident in the recent outcry about the establishment of an Islamic community center in lower Manhattan, two blocks from the site of the World Trade Center attacks. Roughly 60% of Americans opposed its construction despite evidence of the center's peaceful aims (PEW Research Center, 2010).

## **Prejudice and Discrimination**

In addition to evidence of increased intolerance post-9/11, there was also evidence of increased prejudice and discrimination against those perceived as superficially similar to the 9/11 attackers. For example, 80 Arab American passengers were removed from airplanes for being Muslim or having Arab sounding names in the first 13 months following the attacks (Ibish, 2003). Illegal passenger removal occurred on every major U.S. airline and primarily resulted from passengers' or crew members' uneasiness with the passenger's perceived ethnicity. Muslim and Arab Americans have also been subjected to a sharp increase in employment and housing discrimination, racial profiling, harassment, and bullying of students as a result of the attacks (Ibish, 2003; Wessler & De Andrade, 2006).

Even close to a decade later, there remains a clear increase in prejudice against groups symbolically associated with the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Forty-three percent of Americans in 2010 reported holding at least "a little" prejudice toward Muslims, and 53% reported an unfavorable view of the Islamic faith (Gallup News Service, 2010). Not surprisingly, these negative views are reflected in Americans' continued support for discriminatory measures toward Muslims even long after 9/11. For example, the percentage of Americans who reported that they would not want a Muslim neighbor increased by 8% between 2000 and 2006 (Schafer & Shaw, 2009).

## **Hate Crimes**

Another consequence of the 9/11 attacks has been increases in hate crimes against Arab Americans, Muslims, and similar targets (Singh, 2002). A hate crime occurs when a perpetrator is motivated to victimize another person because of that person's membership in a certain social group (e.g., race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity/national origin; U.S. Department of Justice, 1999). Hate crimes can range from words or actions meant to encourage or instigate violence to actual physical or sexual assaults, homicide, and other acts of violence (Herek, 1989). Hate crimes can be distinguished from other crimes against persons or property in the symbolic and instrumental functions they serve (Berk, 1990). Hate crimes serve a symbolic function by conveying a message of fear and intimidation to anyone in the target group. Hate crimes also serve an instrumental function because they are intended to (and often do) alter the behavior of the targeted group, such as keeping them from patronizing a given business or from living in a certain neighborhood.

Hate crimes against Arab Americans, Muslims, and similar targets spiked immediately post-9/11 and have continued at higher than pre-9/11 levels since the attacks. For example, more than 700 acts of violence that targeted Arab Americans or those perceived to be Arab were documented in the first nine months following 9/11 (Ibish, 2003), a dramatic increase over the fewer than 10 incidents reported from 1998 to 2000 (Kaplan, 2006). These figures were mirrored in Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) statistics

that indicated that the number of anti-Islamic offenses increased from 33 in 2000 to 546 in 2001.

By 2002, the number of anti-Arab and Islamic hate crimes decreased considerably from the height immediately post-9/11 to 170 offenses, but anti-Arab and Islamic hate crime has not returned to anywhere near the previously low levels observed before 9/11. Instead, the number of hate crimes perpetrated against these groups has remained stable from 2002 to 2008 at a rate many times higher than it had been prior to 9/11 (2008 represents the most recently available crime report data; FBI, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009).

### **Support for War**

In addition to examples of Americans targeting groups within U.S. borders, there are reasons to believe that Americans' policy attitudes about the Iraq war were influenced by desires for post-9/11 revenge. Although American's support for the Iraq war can be explained by a host of variables (e.g., perceived threat and related insecurity, opinion leadership), there is considerable evidence that displaced aggression also played a role. Even before 9/11, there had already been some American support for military action against Iraq, but support for a war against Iraq clearly increased immediately post-9/11 and in the months that followed. For example, support for deploying ground troops to remove Saddam Hussein from power jumped from 52% in early 2001 to 74% following the attacks, as did a willingness to incur substantial U.S. casualties in this effort (Foyle, 2004; Jacobson, 2007). Notably, this surge in support for the war preceded the Bush administration's charges that Iraq was amassing weapons of mass destruction.

Although support for war has been widely attributed to the insecurity and fear gripping the nation following the attacks (e.g., Gadarian, 2010; Huddy et al., 2005), several studies that directly compared the effects of post-9/11 anger and fear on support for war found that anger about 9/11 was a stronger predictor of American bellicosity than fear (Huddy, Feldman, & Cassese, 2007; Sadler, Lineberger, Correll, & Park, 2005; Skitka, Bauman, Aramovich, & Morgan, 2006). Other recent research that carefully controlled for alternative explanations for Americans' support for the war (e.g., fear, patriotism, opinion leadership) found that post-9/11 desires for vengeance played a significant role in support for the Iraq war (Liberman & Skitka, 2011). Although the desire for revenge was not completely divorced from forward-looking and utilitarian incentives for the use of military force, the effect of revenge was nonetheless a significant and unique contributor in the first few months following 9/11. Moreover, expectations that the war would avenge 9/11 remained a significant predictor of war support in January 2003, just before the war began, even when controlling for utilitarian incentives for punishment (e.g., the threat that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction). By 2008, however, support for the Iraq war was mixed. As 9/11 receded into the background, only 37% of Americans continued to be-

lieve that the Iraq war was justified (Shambaugh et al., 2010).

In summary, Americans responded to the 9/11 attacks with increased political intolerance, prejudice and discrimination, hate crimes, and displaced vengeance. It is important to note, however, that Americans did not respond to 9/11 only with negative and hostile reactions. Americans also reacted with a number of more positive responses, as we review next.

### **Positive and Prosocial Reactions to 9/11**

In addition to their many negative responses to 9/11, Americans responded to the attacks with positive and prosocial impulses. For example, many people responded by wanting to learn more about Islam, as evidenced by the Koran's suddenly emerging on many lists of bestselling books after 9/11. Likewise, many responded to 9/11 by putting into place programs to educate people about the tenets of Islam and to encourage tolerance, including teaching about the Koran and Islam to schoolchildren (e.g., S. Moore, 2001). Furthermore, 58% of Americans believed that 9/11 resulted in "benefits," such as greater kindness and altruism, increased perceptions that life is precious, and greater political awareness and engagement (Poulin, Silver, Gil-Rivas, Holman, & McIntosh, 2009).

### **Experiences of Interpersonal Closeness**

Americans drew closer not only to friends and loved ones, but also to their fellow citizens in the wake of 9/11 (Ai, Cascio, Santangelo, & Evans-Campbell, 2005; Milam, Ritt-Olson, Tan, Unger, & Nezami, 2005). One New Yorker shared the following insight (Abrams, Albright, & Panofsky, 2004, p. 198):

The coolest thing, the coolest and the scariest, was everybody on the street was talking to each other. Making sure everybody had a place to go . . . And people you wouldn't normally see talking, too . . . it was kind of cool the way New Yorkers really came together.

Similarly, a participant in a study that investigated the ways that Americans coped with 9/11 (Ai et al., 2005, p. 537) reported,

My family means so much more to me. Life is so valuable and you realize this when someone you love could have been in that building when it fell.

Consistent with these individual experiences, 60% of Americans reported that their personal relationships were stronger one month after the attacks (Saad, 2001), and 40% of participants increased their attempts to do nice things for friends and family (Skitka et al., 2004). Trust in fellow citizens also increased: There was an 8% to 10% increase in trust of neighbors and community leaders relative to the months preceding 9/11 (Putnam, 2002). People similarly perceived greater interpersonal closeness among others; 16% of respondents endorsed statements such as "most people are kinder and more caring toward each other" (Poulin et al., 2009). In short, one of 9/11's silver linings

was that Americans felt a greater sense of community and closeness with their families, friends, and neighbors.

### Blood Donation

In addition to experiencing increased closeness with others, Americans also exhibited more overt positive reactions to 9/11 such as donating blood. Many Americans began donating blood even before a call for increased donations had been announced. Blood donation levels following 9/11 were unprecedented—over 475,000 additional units of blood were collected in response to the attack (Heinrich, 2002). Taken together, blood donations were 2.5 times higher in the first week following the attacks and at least 1.3 times higher in the second through fourth weeks following the attacks, compared with the same weeks one year earlier (Glynn et al., 2003). Although unprecedented, the effects of 9/11 on blood donations were short lived. Blood donation rates fell to the pre-9/11 baseline by November 2001 (Heinrich, 2002).

### Volunteerism and Charitable Giving

The 9/11 attacks also motivated Americans to donate time and money. Between 7% and 10% more people reported volunteering, and 6% more people reported working on a community project in the months following the attack than had reported doing so during the previous summer (Putnam, 2002; Torabi & Seo, 2004). Even more generosity was exhibited in people's monetary donations to charity. Individuals, corporations, and foundations contributed \$1.9 billion to charities related to the attacks—more than was given to any other relief effort until that time (Lewis, 2002).

### Displaying the American Flag

Americans also responded to 9/11 with an increased tendency to display the American flag. Between 74% and 82% of Americans responded to the attacks by displaying the American flag on their home, car, or person (D. W. Moore, 2003; Roberts, 2002). Interestingly, research on the question of why people flew the flag post-9/11 revealed that this response was more clearly motivated by patriotism (love of country and ingroup solidarity) than by nationalism (out-group antipathy and uncritical acceptance of national, state, and political authorities; Skitka, 2005). Again, however, this normatively positive response was relatively short lived. National polls indicated that the number of people who displayed the American flag after the Iraq war began in 2003 had substantially decreased to 56% (D. W. Moore, 2003).

Although flag displays decreased by 2003 (perhaps because of the Iraq war and because what it meant to display the flag had shifted), it does appear that increases in patriotism post-9/11 have persisted and remain higher than they were pre-2001 (Morales, 2010). In contrast to short-lived changes in blood donation and flag-display behavior, the increase in post-9/11 patriotism seems to be a more enduring trend.

### Political Trust, Engagement, and Knowledge

There are also reasons to believe that people responded to 9/11 with increased trust in both local and national government (a “rally around the flag” effect; Hetherington & Nelson, 2002). Forty-four percent more people reported trusting the national government in the months following 9/11 than had done so the previous summer (Putnam, 2002). Similarly, the President's approval rating increased by 38%, Congress's approval ratings increased 42%, and satisfaction with the direction of the country increased 24% over the same period. These post-9/11 boosts in trust, however, were relatively temporary. By August 2003, each of the above indices had fallen back to their pre-9/11 baselines, possibly as a consequence of dissatisfaction with the Afghanistan and Iraq wars (Jones, 2003). By 2007, only 29% of Americans said that they were satisfied with the way the national government had responded to 9/11; approximately half of Americans believed that national politicians had exploited 9/11 for political purposes; and approximately half of Americans believed that the national government could not be trusted to provide information about 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and the Iraq war (Shambough et al., 2010).

In addition to a short-term spike in governmental trust, the 9/11 terrorist attacks also led to an increased interest and engagement in politics. Fourteen percent more people reported an interest in politics and 5% more reported attending political meetings in the months immediately following the attacks than had in the months before (Putnam, 2002). Similarly, people expressed more interest and knowledge about “the war on terrorism” and politics in general in the months following the 9/11 attacks than they had before the attacks (Ai et al., 2005; Prior, 2002).

In summary, Americans responded to the 9/11 attacks with a number of positive and prosocial behaviors. Furthermore, engaging in prosocial behaviors was associated with lower levels of post-9/11 depression and distress (Kaniasty & Norris, 1995) and with higher levels of political tolerance four months after the attacks (Skitka et al., 2004). In short, engaging in prosocial behaviors had direct personal value, in addition to facilitating political tolerance. Nonetheless, Americans' positive responses were relatively fleeting, whereas their negative reactions had longer-lasting effects.

### Theoretical Accounts for People's Reactions to 9/11

Americans responded to the 9/11 terrorist attacks with what at first glance seems to be an odd combination of reactions. On the one hand, the attacks triggered hostile responses toward those symbolically associated with the attacks in the form of increased political intolerance, prejudice, discrimination, hate crimes, and displaced vengeance. On the other hand, the attacks triggered prosocial responses, such as increased closeness with others, charitable giving, and political engagement. When viewed through the lenses of social psychological theories such as value protection the-

ory and terror management theory, however, this seemingly odd combination begins to make sense.

Both value protection and terror management theories provide insights into people's reactions to symbolic threats against their worldviews. People's cultural worldviews give them a sense that their lives and their experiences are stable and ordered, and that the world is a place of meaning rather than chaos (Pyszczynski et al., 1999). Events such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks are assaults against not only physical targets but also people's expectations about and understanding of the world around them. After such attacks, survivors find themselves trapped between a comfortable but untenable and outdated worldview and a new, negative, and threatening view of the world (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). In other words, 9/11 posed an immense and unexpected threat to Americans' belief that life in the United States is safe from random terrorist attacks and provided Americans with a dramatic reminder that not everyone holds the United States in high regard. Theories that focus on threats against people's worldviews, therefore, provide insights into the social psychological impact of 9/11.

### **Value Protection Theory**

Value protection theory provides a useful framework to explain the ways that people cope with threats to their moral and cultural worldviews (Tetlock et al., 2000). Value protection theory posits that people respond with distress and a strong motivation to re-establish their sense of moral order when faced with threats to their cherished values and beliefs.

People channel this motivated arousal through two channels: moral outrage and moral cleansing. Moral outrage refers to people's attempts to restore their psychological equilibrium by vilifying those whom they perceive as responsible for the source of the threat and by taking action to shore up the perceived moral perimeter against future attacks. In the wake of 9/11, people seemed to express their moral outrage by targeting groups symbolically associated with the attackers for increased political intolerance, prejudice, discrimination, and desires for vengeance.

People also seemed to attempt to alleviate the motivated arousal resulting from threats to their worldview by engaging in moral cleansing. When people come into close contact with perceived immorality or evil, they react as if evil is possibly contagious (Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006). People, therefore, respond with behaviors designed to morally cleanse—that is, with behaviors that remind themselves and others of their fundamental goodness and value (Tetlock et al., 2000). Moral outrage is an interpersonal or intergroup response aimed at re-establishing moral order and guarding against further threats, whereas moral cleansing is a comparatively intrapsychic response that provides reassurance that both oneself and others can be fundamentally good and that the things one cherishes most have not been completely corrupted or contaminated. In sum, value protection theory suggests that people's negative responses to 9/11 (e.g., increased political intolerance, hate crimes) were examples of moral outrage, whereas people's positive

responses (e.g., donating blood, trying to be nicer to friends and family) were examples of moral cleansing.

When attempting to make sense of the social psychological responses to 9/11, it is important to note that people do not respond to threats such as terrorist attacks with only moral outrage or only moral cleansing: When threats are sufficiently severe, people strive to restore their sense of order by expressing high levels of both responses (Skitka et al., 2004; Tetlock et al., 2000). Accordingly, a plurality of Americans (37%) responded to the 9/11 attacks with examples of both moral outrage and moral cleansing. That said, not all Americans reacted to 9/11 with both outrage and cleansing—suggesting that these two responses are distinct. Sizable percentages of the Americans public responded with examples of (a) moral outrage but not cleansing (18%), (b) moral cleansing but not outrage (16%), or neither outrage nor cleansing (29%; Skitka et al., 2004; Skitka, Saunders, Morgan, & Wisneski, 2009).

Americans' disparate coping strategies after 9/11 raise an important question: Which factors predicted whether people reacted with outrage or cleansing? One variable that predicted Americans' reactions was the extent to which they responded to the 9/11 attacks with anger versus fear (Skitka et al., 2004; Skitka et al., 2009). In general, increased anger about 9/11 predicted higher moral outrage, and increased fear after 9/11 predicted higher moral cleansing. Furthermore, people who expressed high degrees of both anger and fear were the most likely to express both moral outrage and cleansing, whereas people who expressed low degrees of both anger and fear were the least likely to express both coping mechanisms—findings that are consistent with value protection theory's prediction that attacks such as 9/11 result in aversive arousal. Moreover, these findings suggest that the nature of aversive arousal that people felt (i.e., anger or fear) after the attacks affected the strategies they used to cope with the tragic events of 9/11.

In summary, value protection theory provides a useful framework for understanding people's different reactions to 9/11. Moral outrage and moral cleansing represent two distinct psychological mechanisms through which people cope with traumatic and worldview-threatening attacks. In the wake of 9/11, there was widespread evidence that people responded to the terrorist attacks with one or both of these emotions and that the nature of their emotional reactions influenced the degree to which they responded to 9/11 with moral outrage and/or moral cleansing.

### **Terror Management Theory**

Terror management theory (Pyszczynski et al., 1999) provides another plausible framework for understanding Americans' reactions to 9/11. Terror management theorists posit that much of human behavior is motivated by a fear of death. To cope with the knowledge of their impending and unavoidable death, people adhere to and fiercely protect their cultural worldviews, especially when reminded of their own mortality (Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1997).

Terror management theorists argue that 9/11 was a striking reminder to people of their own mortality (see Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2003, for an in-depth review). Moreover, people's reactions to 9/11 are consistent with terror management theory's predictions. For example, when morality salience is high, people are more likely to derogate outgroups (Greenberg et al., 1990; Rosenblatt, Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski, & Lyon, 1989) and are more aggressive toward those who pose a possible threat to their worldview (McGregor et al., 1998). Higher levels of mortality salience are also associated with increased reverence toward national symbols, icons, ideals, and values (Greenberg, Porteus, Simon, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1995), national pride (Kazén, Baumann, & Kuhl, 2005), helping behavior (Gailliot, Stillman, Schmeichel, Maner, & Plant, 2008), and charitable giving (Ferraro, Shiv, & Bettman, 2005).

In sum, similar to value protection theory, terror management theory provides a framework for understanding Americans' positive and negative reactions to 9/11. Americans' positive reactions (e.g., displaying the flag and donating to charity) as well as their negative reactions (e.g., increased prejudice and intolerance) can be understood as reactions that were motivated by people's need to cope with the salient reminder 9/11 provided of the fragility of life and the inevitability of death.

## Discussion

In this article we have reviewed two theories that provide insights into the ways that people respond to symbolic threats against their cultural worldviews and, thus, provide accounts for the powerful social psychological impact of 9/11. Value protection theory and terror management theory provide different, albeit complementary, accounts for people's responses to worldview threats such as terrorist attacks. Relative to value protection theory, terror management theory places a stronger emphasis on existential terror and does not distinguish between moral outrage and moral cleansing. That said, both theories suggest that threats such as 9/11 result in intense aversive arousal and motivate people both to defensively protect their worldviews from further threat and to bolster their worldviews by affirming shared values and ideals.

In addition to value protection and terror management theories, we also note that other social psychological theories can no doubt explain aspects of people's reactions to 9/11. For example, intergroup threat theory suggests that perceived threat from outgroups leads people to see threatening groups as both more homogeneous (Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992; Rothgerber, 1997) as well as more extreme (Corneille, Yzerbyt, Rogier, & Buidin, 2001), and increases ingroup identification and cohesion (e.g., Moskalenko, McCauley, & Rozin, 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1979)—processes that no doubt contributed to some of the findings reviewed here. Americans' responses to 9/11 may have also been at least partly driven by utilitarian concerns, such as increased anxiety about both national and personal security. That said, utilitarian concerns did not explain all the variance in Americans' responses (Liberman & Skitka,

2011), and value protection and terror management theories still provide some insight into why Americans reacted to 9/11 with simultaneous hostility toward outgroups and bolstering of their own cultural ideals.

One troubling conclusion of our review is that the targets of Americans' negative reactions typically bore no actual responsibility for the events of 9/11. The actual perpetrators of 9/11 were either killed in the attacks or had gone into hiding, making it difficult for Americans to exact vengeance on those who were actually responsible. Without a clear outlet for vengeance, Americans appear to have instead targeted groups symbolically related to the attackers within the U.S. borders (Arab and Muslim Americans) as well as outside of them (e.g., Saddam Hussein and Iraq). Although much more research is needed to fully understand the psychology of people's reactions to worldview threat, the evidence reviewed here suggests that there is considerable risk of collateral damage when people cannot target their rage at those responsible for events like 9/11.

Finally, our review of Americans' responses to 9/11 has a number of important implications for the ways that Americans can best cope with the uncertainty that is associated with terrorist attacks. Although attempts to defend one's cultural worldview through negative behaviors may serve utilitarian or palliative functions when targeted directly at the actual perpetrators of wrongdoing, they seem to serve little psychological purpose when aimed at those who are, at best, only symbolically associated with a threat or transgression. For example, people who expressed high levels of negative behaviors (i.e., moral outrage) were particularly unlikely to have found closure about 9/11 four months after the attacks (Skitka et al., 2004). In addition, there is considerable evidence that vengeance breeds vengeance and creates cycles of violence that are very difficult to resolve (e.g., Kim, 2005); it often leaves people feeling worse than they felt before (Carlsmith, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2008), even when they can direct vengeance at those personally responsible for a transgression. In other words, moral outrage can be a dysfunctional and disruptive response at both the individual and the collective levels.

A more promising coping strategy in response to terrorist attacks is for people to focus on reassuring themselves and others that people can be decent, good, and kind. Affirming core values through increased volunteerism, charitable donations, and political engagement confers clear prosocial benefits. Moreover, people who expressed high numbers of positive behaviors (i.e., moral cleansing) were particularly likely to have found closure four months after the horror of 9/11 (Skitka et al., 2004). Such findings suggest that life outside the walls of Disneyland may be troubled and uncertain, but it need not be exclusively or even primarily dark and hostile.

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