

CHAPTER 1

Polarization

What explains the rise of fascism in the 1930s? The emergence of student radicalism in the 1960s? The growth of Islamic terrorism in the 1990s? The Rwandan genocide in 1994? Ethnic conflict in the former Yugoslavia and in Iraq? Acts of torture and humiliation by American soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison? The American financial crisis of 2008? The widespread belief, in some parts of the world, that Israel or the United States was responsible for the attacks of September 11, 2001? And what, if anything, do these questions have to do with one another?

Here is a clue. Some years ago, a number of citizens of France were assembled into small groups to exchange views about their president and about the intentions of the United States with respect to foreign aid.¹ Before they started to talk, the participants tended to like their president and to distrust the intentions of the United States. After they talked, some strange things happened. Those who began by liking their president ended up liking their president significantly

more. And those who expressed mild distrust toward the United States moved in the direction of far greater distrust. The small groups of French citizens became more extreme. As a result of their discussions, they were more enthusiastic about their leader, and far more skeptical of the United States, than similar people in France who had not been brought together to speak with one another.

This tale reveals a general fact of social life: Much of the time, groups of people end up thinking and doing things that group members would never think or do on their own. This is true for groups of teenagers, who are willing to run risks that individuals would avoid. It is certainly true for those prone to violence, including terrorists and those who commit genocide. It is true for investors and corporate executives. It is true for government officials, neighborhood groups, social reformers, political protestors, police officers, student organizations, labor unions, and juries. Some of the best and worst developments in social life are a product of group dynamics, in which members of organizations, both small and large, move one another in new directions.

Of course, the best explanations of fascism are not adequate to explain student rebellions, and even if we understand both of these, we will not be able to explain ethnic conflict in Iraq, the Rwandan genocide, abuse and brutality at Abu Ghraib, conspiracy theories involving Israel, or the subprime crisis. For particular events, general explanations can uncover only parts of the picture. But I do aim to show striking similarities among a wide range of social phenomena. The unifying theme is simple: *When people find themselves in groups of like-minded types, they are especially likely to move to extremes.* And when such groups include authorities who tell group members what to do, or who put them into certain social roles, very bad things can happen.

In exploring why this is so, I hope to see what might be done about unjustified extremism—a threat to security, to peace, to economic development, and to sensible decisions in all sorts of domains. My emphasis throughout is on the phenomenon of *group polarization*. This phenomenon offers large lessons about the behavior of consumers, interest groups, the real estate market, religious organizations, political parties, liberation movements, executive agencies, legislatures, racists, judicial panels, those who make peace, those who make war, and even nations as a whole.

GROUPS AND EXTREMISM

When people talk together, what happens? Do group members compromise? Do they move toward the middle of the tendencies of their individual members? The answer is now clear, and it is not what intuition would suggest: Groups go to extremes. More precisely, members of a deliberating group usually end up at a more extreme position in the same general direction as their inclinations before deliberation began.²

This is the phenomenon known as group polarization. Group polarization is the typical pattern with deliberating groups. It is not limited to particular periods, nations, or cultures. On the contrary, group polarization has been found in hundreds of studies involving more than a dozen countries, including the United States, France, Afghanistan, New Zealand, Taiwan, and Germany.³ It provides a clue to extremism of many different kinds.

Consider four examples:

1. White people who tend to show significant racial prejudice will show more racial prejudice after speaking with one another. By contrast, white people who

- tend to show little racial prejudice will show less prejudice after speaking with one another.⁴
2. Feminism becomes more attractive to women after they talk to one another—at least if the women who are talking begin with an inclination in favor of feminism.⁵
 3. Those who approve of an ongoing war effort, and think that the war is going well, become still more enthusiastic about that effort, and still more optimistic, after they talk together.
 4. If investors begin with the belief that it is always best to invest in real estate, their eagerness to invest in real estate will grow as a result of discussions with one another.

In these and countless other cases, like-minded people tend to move to a more extreme version of what they thought before they started to talk. Suppose in this light that enclaves of people are inclined to rebellion or even violence and that they are separated from other groups. They might move sharply in the direction of violence as a consequence of their self-segregation. Political extremism is often a product of group polarization,⁶ and social segregation is a useful tool for producing polarization.

In fact, a good way to create an extremist group, or a cult of any kind, is to separate members from the rest of society. The separation can occur physically or psychologically, by creating a sense of suspicion about nonmembers. With such separation, the information and views of those outside the group can be discredited, and hence nothing will disturb the process of polarization as group members continue to talk. Deliberating enclaves of like-minded people are often a breeding ground for extreme movements. Terrorists are made, not born, and terrorist networks often operate in just this way. As a result, they can move otherwise ordinary

people to violent acts.⁷ But the point goes well beyond such domains. Group polarization occurs in our daily lives; it involves our economic decisions, our evaluations of our neighbors, even our decisions about what to eat, what to drink, and where to live.

To understand the nature of the basic phenomenon and its power and generality, let me outline three studies in which I have personally been involved.

RED STATES, BLUE STATES

In 2005, Reid Hastie, David Schkade, and I conducted a small experiment in democracy in Colorado.⁸ About sixty American citizens were brought together and assembled into ten groups, usually consisting of six people. Members of each group were asked to deliberate on three of the most controversial issues of the day.

Should states allow same-sex couples to enter into civil unions?
Should employers engage in "affirmative action" by giving a preference to members of traditionally disadvantaged groups?
Should the United States sign an international treaty to combat global warming?

As the experiment was designed, the groups consisted of "liberal" and "conservative" members—the former from Boulder, the latter from Colorado Springs. It is widely known that Boulder tends to be liberal and that Colorado Springs tends to be conservative. The groups were screened to ensure that their members generally conformed to these stereotypes. For example, group members were asked to report on their assessment of Vice President Dick Cheney. In Boulder, those who liked him were cordially excused from the experiment. In Colorado Springs, those who disliked him were similarly excused.

In this way, the experiment involved groups of like-minded people. In the parlance of election years in the United States, the experiment created five “Blue State” groups and five “Red State” groups—five groups whose members initially tended toward liberal positions in general and five whose members tended toward conservative positions. On the three issues that interested us, however, participants were not screened at all. There was no way of knowing their precise views on civil unions, affirmative action, and climate change. Participants were asked to state their opinions anonymously both before and after fifteen minutes of group discussion, and also to try to reach a public verdict before the final anonymous statement. Their opinions were registered on a scale of 0–10, where 0 meant “disagree very strongly,” 5 meant “disagree slightly,” and 10 meant “agree very strongly” with the relevant proposition (states should allow civil unions for same-sex couples, employers should maintain affirmative action programs, the United States should sign an international agreement to control global warming). We were especially interested in a single question: How would people’s private, anonymous statements of their views change as a result of a brief period of discussion?

As the experiment unfolded, people in both Boulder and Colorado Springs were polite, engaged, and substantive. They treated each other with civility and respect. I have seen the videos of several of these discussions, and it is fair to say that for most of the participants, there was an effort to think hard, to listen to others, and to be reasonable. What was the effect of discussion? There were three critical findings.

More Extremism

In almost every group, members ended up with more extreme positions after they spoke with one another. Most

of the liberals in Boulder favored an international treaty to control global warming before discussion; their enthusiasm increased after discussion. Most of the conservatives in Colorado were neutral on that treaty before discussion; they strongly opposed it after discussion. Discussion made same-sex civil unions more popular among the liberals in Boulder; discussion made civil unions less popular among conservatives in Colorado Springs. Mildly favorable toward affirmative action before discussion, liberals became strongly favorable toward affirmative action after discussion. Firmly negative about affirmative action before discussion, conservatives became even more negative about affirmative action after discussion.

Much Less Internal Diversity

The experiment had a separate effect, one that is equally important: It made both liberal groups and conservative groups significantly more homogeneous—and thus squelched diversity. Before members started to talk, many groups displayed a fair bit of internal disagreement. The group disagreements were reduced as a result of a mere fifteen-minute discussion. Note that the primary test here involves what happened to their *anonymous* statements. How diverse were people’s predeliberation views, on these issues, compared with their postdeliberation views? In their private statements, group members showed far more consensus after discussion than before.

Greater Rifts

It follows that discussion helped to widen the rift between liberals and conservatives on all three issues. Before discussion, some liberal groups were, on some issues, fairly close to

some conservative groups. The result of discussion was to divide them far more sharply.

Here, then, is an initial indication of why groups go to extremes. When people talk to like-minded others, they tend to amplify their preexisting views, and to do so in a way that reduces their internal diversity. We see this happen in politics; it happens in families, businesses, churches and synagogues, and student organizations as well.

FEDERAL JUDGES AND POLARIZED DIFFERENCES

For many decades, the United States has been conducting a truly extraordinary natural experiment involving group behavior, moderation, and extremism. The experiment involves federal judges, who are randomly assigned into groups that look a bit like Boulder and Colorado Springs. What can we learn from this experiment? The simplest lesson is that no less than ordinary citizens, like-minded judges go to extremes. This is a striking finding, because judges are specialists and learned in the law; they are not supposed to be so vulnerable to the political inclinations of their colleagues.

On federal courts of appeals, judicial panels consist of three judges. The possible panel compositions are just four: (a) three Republican appointees, (b) three Democratic appointees, (c) two Republican appointees and one Democratic appointee, and (d) two Democratic appointees and one Republican appointee. Panel assignments are random, and the sample is very large. For this reason, it is possible to test whether judicial votes are affected by panel composition—that is, whether Republican and Democratic appointees vote differently depending on whether they are sitting with Republican or Democratic appointees. Do we observe anything like group polarization among federal judges?

For present purposes, the key questions are these: How do Republican appointees vote on panels consisting solely of Republican appointees (RRR panels)? How do Democratic appointees vote on panels consisting solely of Democratic appointees (DDD panels)? RRR panels are a bit like Colorado Springs, and DDD panels are a bit like Boulder. Do federal judges behave as citizens do in the Colorado experiment? More specifically, we might ask whether Republican appointees, on RRR panels, behave differently from Republican appointees on RRD panels or RDD panels, and whether Democratic appointees, on DDD panels, behave differently from Democratic appointees on DDR or DRR panels. Do like-minded judges show especially distinctive voting patterns?

The phenomenon of group polarization tells us what to expect. Both Democratic and Republican appointees should show extreme behavior on panels that are unified, that is, on DDD and RRR panels. Wherever Democratic appointees and Republican appointees show a general difference in voting patterns, that difference will be *amplified* if we compare Democratic appointees on DDD panels with Republican appointees on RRR panels. To test this claim, we might want to compare two figures: (a) the total difference between the liberal voting rates of Democratic appointees and that of Republican appointees and (b) the difference between the liberal voting rates of Democratic appointees on all-Democratic panels and the liberal voting rates of Republican appointees on all-Republican panels. The latter difference—between Democratic appointees on DDD panels and Republican appointees on RRR panels—might be called the *polarized difference*.

In countless areas, Democratic appointees show especially liberal voting patterns on all-Democratic panels. Republican appointees show especially conservative voting patterns on

all-Republican panels. If we aggregate all cases showing an ideological difference between the two groups, we find a 15 percent difference between Republican and Democratic appointees in liberal voting rates. That is a pretty big difference. But the polarized difference is far higher—34 percent!

Our method was quite simple. We collected tens of thousands of judicial votes, mostly in ideologically contested cases, including race discrimination, sex discrimination, disability discrimination, affirmative action, campaign finance, environmental protection, labor, and free speech. We used simple, relatively uncontroversial tests to code decisions as “liberal” or “conservative.” For example, a judicial ruling in favor of an African American plaintiff, alleging race discrimination, was coded as liberal. Similarly, we characterized as liberal a vote that fits the usual political stereotypes—to uphold an affirmative action program, a campaign finance restriction, an environmental regulation challenged as too aggressive, or a decision of the National Labor Relations Board in favor of employees. True, these tests of whether a judicial decision is liberal are pretty crude. But because the sample is so big, we are able to discern clear and illuminating patterns; the crudeness of the tests does not seem to have introduced distortions.

Consider just a few key examples.⁹

- In gay rights cases, the overall spread between Republican appointees and Democratic appointees is 41 percent—Republican appointees vote in favor of gay rights 16 percent of the time compared with a 57 percent rate for Democratic appointees. But if we compare how Democratic appointees vote on DDD panels to how Republican appointees vote on RRR panels, the polarized difference turns out to be more than

double—86 percent! In our data set, Republican appointees vote pro-gay rights 14 percent of the time on RRR panels—compared with 100 percent for Democratic appointees on DDD panels.

- In cases involving disability discrimination, the overall difference is 18 percent; the polarized difference is nearly double, at 33 percent.
- In cases involving decisions by the Environmental Protection Agency, the overall difference in voting is 15 percent; the polarized difference is no less than 36 percent.
- In affirmative action cases, the overall difference is a significant 28 percent; the polarized difference is a whopping 49 percent.
- In sex discrimination cases, the overall difference is 17 percent; the polarized difference is nearly triple, at 46 percent.

If all of the evidence is taken as a whole, the lesson is unmistakable. It is not exactly shocking to find that Republican and Democratic appointees show significantly different voting patterns. But the overall difference is much smaller than the polarized difference—the difference between how Republican appointees vote when sitting only with Republican appointees and how Democratic appointees vote when sitting only with Democratic appointees. On this score, judges do not look a whole lot different from citizens in Colorado Springs and Boulder. When they sit with like-minded others, they become more extreme.

One qualification: While this is the central pattern in many areas of the law, there are three areas in which judges are not affected by the panel’s composition. In those areas, both Republican and Democratic appointees vote the same whether they are in the minority or part of a unified panel. The three areas are abortion, capital punishment, and national

security. Apparently judges have such strong convictions in such cases that they are not affected by what their colleagues say or do. I will return to this point later; it offers an important cautionary note about my central claims. Sometimes people feel really strongly, and the views of others do not move them.

PUNISHING WRONGDOERS

Now let us turn to the behavior of juries and, in particular, to the effects of deliberation on punitive damage awards. This is a pretty technical area, but an understanding of those effects will, I hope, illuminate a number of issues including but extending well beyond politics and law.

In American law, punitive damage awards are of major importance in their own right. Companies are greatly concerned about unpredictable and sometimes very high awards, in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Many people have tried to develop ways to discipline jury decisions, and the Supreme Court has taken an active interest in the problem. More important still, punitive damage awards provide an excellent area in which to study the consequences of discussion on group behavior, especially for people who display a degree of outrage—and outrage is one of my central concerns here.

If group members begin with a degree of outrage, do deliberating groups become more outraged or less so? The answer bears on social movements and political protests of many different kinds. As we shall see, it also bears on feuds, ethnic conflict, and even family behavior. When a child is upset at unfair behavior at school, how are parents likely to react? When a husband is angry about unfairness directed at him at work, how will a wife react, and how will his wife's reaction affect him?

To understand the jury experiments, conducted with Daniel Kahneman and David Schkade, we must begin with a study of individuals, not groups, involving about 1,000 people, who were asked to register their judgments about misconduct by a corporate defendant.¹⁰ The goal was to understand why punitive damage awards are so variable: Why do some juries come up with awards of \$100,000 and others with awards of \$1 million, in cases that seem pretty similar? We asked people to record their judgments on three different scales. The first was a bounded scale of 0 to 6, involving the outrageousness of the company's behavior. Each of the points along the scale was clearly marked, so that 0 meant "not at all outrageous" and 6 meant "exceptionally outrageous." The second was also a bounded scale of 0 to 6, but this scale measured the desired level of punishment; 0 meant "none" and 6 meant "extremely severe" punishment. The third scale was the unbounded one of dollars. Should the company have to pay \$10,000? \$100,000? \$1 million? More?

Our central findings, involving personal injury cases, were straightforward. People agree on how outrageous corporate misconduct is. They also agree on the appropriate severity of punishment on the bounded scale. But the dollar scale creates a lot of trouble and confusion.

To establish these points, we used a simple technique, in which individual responses are pooled to produce "statistical juries," whose verdict is the judgment of the median member. Having done this, we found that small groups of six people, or statistical juries, usually agree about outrageousness and appropriate punishment. Importantly, the agreement cuts across demographic differences. With the magic of the computer, we can create statistical juries of any imaginable kind—all male, all female, all white, all Hispanic, all African American, all rich, all poor, all old, all young, all

well educated, all poorly educated. Demography does not matter. All these groups essentially agree with one another!

By contrast, statistical juries show a lot of variability with respect to dollar awards. The dollar judgment of one jury is not a good predictor of the dollar judgments of other juries. But demography is not the source of the variability; it is not as if rich people disagree with poor people, or old people disagree with young people, or men disagree with women. The problem is the dollar scale. The reason for the variability is that whatever their demographic group, people do not have a clear sense of how to translate their punitive intentions, on a bounded scale, onto the scale of dollars. Does a "6" mean a punishment of \$50,000, or \$100,000, or \$1 million, or \$10 million, or more? People just don't know. The dollar scale, bounded at the lower end (\$0) and essentially unbounded at the upper end, lacks signposts that give meaning to the various "points" on the scale. For this reason, people who agree that the case is a "4" on a scale of 0-6 may not agree on the appropriate translation of that figure into some monetary equivalent.

The study I have just described involved an effort to pool individual responses; it did not involve group discussion. If we want to understand how juries actually behave, or how outrage develops in the real world, this is a big defect.

Hence we conducted a follow-up experiment, involving about 3,000 jury-eligible citizens and 500 deliberating juries, each with six people. Our goal was to learn how people would be influenced by seeing and discussing the views of others. Here is how the experiment worked. People read about a personal injury case, including the arguments made by both sides. They were also asked to record, in advance of deliberation, an individual "punishment judgment," now on a scale of 0 to 8, where (again) 0 indicated that the defendant should not be punished at all, and 8 indicated

that the defendant should be punished extremely severely. After the individual judgments were recorded, jurors were sorted into six-person groups and asked to deliberate to reach a unanimous "punishment verdict." You might predict (as we did) that people would compromise and that the verdicts of juries would be the median of punishment judgments of jurors. But your prediction would be badly wrong.

Instead, the effect of deliberation was to create both a *severity shift* for high-punishment jurors and a *leniency shift* for low-punishment jurors. When the median judgment of individual jurors was 4 or higher on the 8-point scale, the jury's verdict ended up *higher* than that median judgment. Consider, for example, a case involving a man who nearly drowned on a defectively constructed yacht. Jurors tended to be outraged by the idea of a defectively built yacht, and groups were significantly more outraged than their median members. High levels of outrage and severe punitive judgments became higher and more severe as a result of group interactions.

But when the median judgment of individual jurors was below 4, the jury's verdict was typically *below* that median judgment. Consider a case involving a shopper who was injured in a fall when an escalator suddenly stopped. Individual jurors were not greatly bothered by the incident, seeing it as a genuine accident rather than a case of serious wrongdoing. In such cases, juries were more lenient than individual jurors. Here, then, is a lesson about what happens when people discuss wrongdoing. If group members are upset, they will probably get more upset after talking to each other. If group members think that what happened is not a big deal, they will usually think that what happened is basically nothing after a period of discussion.

With dollar awards, by contrast, juries were systematically more severe in their awards than the median juror. Even the

small awards were typically higher than the award selected by the median juror before people started to talk. Here is the most striking finding: *In 27 percent of the cases, the jury's award was at least as high as that of the highest predeliberation judgment of the members of that particular jury!* Hence the shift toward more severity, and more extremism, was especially pronounced with dollars. It follows, by the way, that the monetary awards by deliberating juries were even more unpredictable than the monetary awards by statistical juries.

Let me underline our two key findings. The first is that when people begin with a high level of outrage and favor some kind of aggressive responses, groups are more aggressive than individuals. The second is that for monetary awards, juries are significantly more extreme than jurors.

TAKING RISKS

What happens when people who are inclined to take risks talk with other people who are inclined to take risks? The answer is that they become still more inclined to take risks.¹¹

Consider, for example, the questions whether to take a new job, to invest in a foreign country, to escape from a prisoner-of-war camp, or to run for political office.¹² With respect to many decisions, members of deliberating groups became significantly more disposed to take risks after a brief period of collective discussion. On the basis of such evidence, it became standard to believe that deliberation produced a systematic "risky shift." For a significant period, the major consequence of group discussion, it was thought, was to produce that risky shift—a thought that would bear on many parts of social life, because groups are often asked to decide whether to take a gamble or, instead, to take precautions.

But later studies drew this conclusion into serious question. They even raised the question whether culture, rather than

group dynamics, is responsible for the risky shift. On many of the same questions on which Americans displayed a risky shift, Taiwanese subjects showed a "cautious shift."¹³ On most of the topics just listed, deliberation led citizens of Taiwan to become significantly less risk-inclined than they were before they started to talk. Nor was the cautious shift limited to the Taiwanese. Among Americans, deliberation sometimes produced a cautious shift as well, as risk-averse people became more reluctant to take certain risks after they talked with one another.¹⁴ There are two major examples of cautious shifts: the decision whether to marry (!) and the decision whether to board a plane despite severe abdominal pain, possibly requiring medical attention. In these cases, the members of deliberating groups moved toward greater caution.

At first glance, it seemed hard to reconcile these competing findings, but the reconciliation turned out to be simple: *The predeliberation median is the best predictor of the direction of the shift.*¹⁵ When group members are disposed toward risk-taking, a risky shift is observed. When members are disposed toward caution, a cautious shift is observed. It follows that the striking difference between American and Taiwanese subjects is not a product of any cultural difference in how people behave in groups. It results from a difference in the predeliberation medians of the Americans and the Taiwanese on the key questions.¹⁶ When Americans show a predeliberation median in favor of caution, discussion moves them toward greater caution; the same is true of Taiwanese. When American groups show a risky shift, and Taiwanese a cautious shift, it is simply because of a difference in their initial inclinations. Thus the risky shift and the cautious shift are both subsumed under the general rubric of group polarization.

It is tempting to wonder whether group polarization is a product of particular cultures and particular "types." But as

I have noted, there is no nation on earth in which group polarization has been found not to occur. I will return, however, to some ways of counteracting it.

In the behavioral laboratory, group polarization has been shown in a remarkably wide range of contexts.¹⁷ How good-looking are certain people? Group deliberation produces more extreme judgments about that question: If individuals think that someone is good-looking, the group is likely to think that person is devastatingly attractive.¹⁸ (Movie stars undoubtedly benefit from this process.) Group polarization also occurs for obscure factual questions, such as how far Sodom (on the Dead Sea) is below sea level.¹⁹ Even burglars show a shift in the cautious direction when they discuss prospective criminal endeavors.²⁰ In a revealing finding at the intersection of cognitive and social psychology, groups have been found to make more, rather than fewer, “conjunction errors” (believing that A and B are more likely to be true than A alone) than individuals when individual error rates are high—though fewer when individual error rates are low.²¹

To get a sense of the power of group polarization in the domains of law and politics, consider just a few more studies. After deliberation, groups of people turn out to be far more inclined to protest apparently unfair behavior than was their median member before discussion began.²² Consider, for example, the appropriate response to three different events: police brutality against African Americans, an apparently unjustified war, and sex discrimination by a local city council. *In every one of these contexts, deliberation made group members far more likely to support aggressive protest action.* Group members moved, for example, from support for a peaceful march to support for a nonviolent demonstration, such as a sit-in at a police station or city hall. Interestingly, the size of the shift toward a more extreme response was correlated with the

initial mean. When people initially supported a strong response, group discussion produced a greater shift in the direction of support for a still stronger response. As we shall see, this finding is standard within the literature: The shift toward extremism is often larger when the average person starts with a pretty extreme position.²³

People often make individual judgments about fairness and unfairness; they also make those judgments in groups. What happens to our judgments about unfairness when we speak with one another? The answer should now be clear: When we are individually inclined to believe that unfairness has occurred, our discussion will intensify our beliefs and make us very angry.²⁴ The relevant studies were quite realistic. People were asked to engage in tasks designed to simulate activities that might actually be undertaken in a business setting—such as classifying budget items, scheduling meetings, and routing a phone message through the proper channels with assignment of the proper level of priority. Good performance could produce financial rewards. After completing the tasks, people were able to ask for their supervisors’ judgments and receive feedback from them. Some of the answers seemed rude and unfair, such as “I’ve decided not to read your message. The instructions say it’s up to me . . . so don’t bother sending me any other messages or explanations about your performance on this task” and “If you would have worked harder, then you’d have scored higher. I will not accept your message on this round!”

People were asked to rate their supervisors along various dimensions, including fairness, politeness, bias, and good leadership. The ratings occurred in three periods. The first included individual ratings, the second included a group consensus judgment, and the third included individual ratings after group judgment. It turned out that group

judgments were far more negative than the average of individual judgments.²⁵ In many cases, group members decided that the behavior was really very unfair, even though individuals believed that the behavior was only mildly unfair. Interestingly, the groups' conclusions were typically more extreme than were people's individual judgments after deliberation. But such judgments were nonetheless more negative, and thus more extreme, than predeliberation individual judgments.

These findings are remarkably similar to those involving juror outrage, where, as we have seen, groups are more outraged than their median member. We now have a strong clue about the sources of protest movements, a topic that I explore in due course. For the moment, let us try to explain group polarization.

CHAPTER 2

Extremism

Why and When

In this chapter, my major goal is to answer two questions: Why do like-minded people go to extremes? And when do they do so? As we shall see, the answers to those questions bear on an exceedingly wide range of social puzzles, including the immense power of authorities, the nature of "evil," the idea of groupthink, and social cascades, by which large groups of people move in new directions in terms of their investments, their political choices, and even their religious convictions.

The most important reason for group polarization, and a key to extremism in all its forms, involves the exchange of new information. Group polarization often occurs because people are telling one another what they know, and what they know is skewed in a predictable direction. When they listen to each other, they move.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. Serge Moscovici and Marisa Zavalloni, The Group as a Polarizer of Attitudes, *J. Personality & Soc. Psych.* 12 (1969): 125.
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3. See *ibid.*, 204.
4. David G. Myers and George D. Bishop, Discussion Effects on Racial Attitudes, *Science* 169 (1970): 778–79.
5. David G. Myers, Discussion-Induced Attitude Polarization, *Hum. Rel.* 16 (1975): 699, 707–11 (finding increase in support for feminism among women inclined to show feminist attitudes).
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7. See Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).
8. See Reid Hastie, David Schkade, and Cass R. Sunstein, What Happened on Deliberation Day? *Cal. L. Rev.* 95 (2007): 915.
9. These examples are taken from Cass R. Sunstein et al., *Are Judges Political? An Empirical Investigation* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2005).
10. See Cass R. Sunstein et al., *Punitive Damages: How Juries Decide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
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12. See Lawrence Hong, Risky Shift and Cautious Shift: Some Direct Evidence on the Culture Value Theory, *Social Psych.* 41 (1978): 342.
13. See *ibid.*
14. Moscovici and Zavalloni, The Group as a Polarizer of Attitudes.
15. *Ibid.*; Brown, *Social Psychology*, 210–12.
16. See Hong, Risky Shift and Cautious Shift.
17. John C. Turner et al., *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory* 142–170 (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987).
18. *Ibid.*, 153.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Paul Cromwell et al., Group Effects on Decision-Making by Burglars, *Psychol. Rep.* 69 (1991): 579, 586.
21. Norbert L. Kerr et al., Bias in Judgment: Comparing Individuals and Groups, *Psychol. Rev.* 103 (1996): 687, 689, 691–93 (citing studies).
22. See Norris Johnson et al., Crowd Behavior as “Risky Shift”: A Laboratory Experiment, *Sociometry* 40 (1977): 183.
23. *Ibid.*, 186.
24. See E. Allan Lind et al., The Social Construction of Injustice: Fairness Judgments in Response to Own and Others’ Unfair Treatment by Authorities, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 75 (1998): 1.
25. *Ibid.*, 16.

Chapter 2

1. See Brown, *Social Psychology*, 200–45.
2. See Robert Baron et al., Social Corroboration and Opinion Extremity, *J. Experimental Soc. Psych.* 32 (1996): 537.
3. See Mark Kelman et al., Context-Dependence in Legal Decision Making, *J. Legal Stud.* 25 (1996): 287, 287–88.
4. Baron et al., Social Corroboration.
5. See Chip Heath and Richard Gonzales, Interaction with Others Increases Decision Confidence but Not Decision Quality: Evidence against Information Collection Views of Interactive Decision Making, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 61 (1997): 305–26.
6. See Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*.
7. *Ibid.*, 116.
8. *Ibid.*
9. See Joseph Henrich et al., Group Report: What Is the Role of Culture in Bounded Rationality? in *Bounded Rationality: The Adaptive Toolbox* (Gerd Gigerenzer and Reinhard Selten, eds., Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 353–54, for an entertaining outline in connection with food choice decisions.

10. Edward Glaeser, Psychology and Paternalism, *U. Chi. L. Rev.* 73 (2006): 133.
11. It has similarly been suggested that majorities are especially potent because people do not want to incur the wrath, or lose the favor, of large numbers of people, and that when minorities have influence, it is because they produce genuine attitudinal change. See Baron et al., Social Corroboration, 82.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Cecilia L. Ridgeway, Social Status and Group Structure, in *Group Processes* (Michael A. Hogg and R. Scott Tindale, eds., 2001), 352, 354 (collecting studies).
14. See Gwen M. Wittenbaum et al., Mutual Enhancement toward an Understanding of the Collective Preference for Shared Information, *J. Personality & Soc. Psych.* 77 (1999): 967, 967–78.
15. See Scott McClellan, *What Happened* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008).
16. *Ibid.*, 253.
17. See Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005).
18. Jean Hatzfeld, *Machete Season* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2005), 71.
19. *Ibid.*, 38.
20. See Timur Kuran, *Public Lies, Private Truths* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).
21. Catherine Hafer and Dimitri Landa, Deliberation as Self-Discovery and Institutions for Political Speech, *J. Theoretical Politics* 19 (2007): 329.
22. *Ibid.*
23. For a formal discussion, see Edward L. Glaeser and Cass R. Sunstein, Extremism and Social Learning, *J. Legal Analysis* (forthcoming 2009).
24. See Russell Hardin, The Crippled Epistemology of Extremism, in *Political Rationality and Extremism* (Albert Breton et al., eds., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
25. See Glaeser and Sunstein, Extremism and Social Learning.
26. See <http://www.orgnet.com/divided.html>.
27. The best discussion is Henry Farrell et al., Self-Segregation or Deliberation? Blog Readership, Participation, and Polarization in American Politics (unpublished manuscript 2008).
28. See Bill Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America Is Tearing Us Apart* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007).
29. See David Schkade et al., Deliberating about Dollars: The Severity Shift, *Colum. L. Rev.* 100 (2000): 1139, 1152, 1155–56.
30. *Ibid.*, 1161–62.
31. See Caryn Christensen and Ann S. Abbott, Team Medical Decision Making, in *Decision Making in Health Care* (Gretchen B. Chapman and Frank A. Sonnenberg, eds., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 267, 269, 272–76 (discussing effects of status on exchange of information in group interactions).