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# Social Issues, Authoritarianism, and Ideological Conceptualization: How Policy Dimensions and Psychological Factors Influence Ideological Labeling

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ABSTRACT: Ideology's crucial theoretical and empirical role in explaining political behavior makes it imperative that scholars understand how individuals conceptualize and apply ideological labels. The existing literature on this topic is quite limited, however, because it relies almost exclusively upon data from the 1970s and 1980s, and it does not examine how psychological factors influence conceptualizations of ideological labels. This paper uses data from two original laboratory experiments to test the relative impact of four major policy dimensions on participants' evaluations of candidate ideology, and to test authoritarianism's role in shaping ideological conceptualization. These analyses indicate that individuals most often define liberalism *and* conservatism primarily in terms of social policies closely associated with religious values, each of which invert traditional ideological orientations toward the appropriate size and role of government. The causal mechanism shaping this relationship is authoritarianism, because, I argue, the religious social policy dimension most clearly evokes the deep-seated value conflicts associated with an authoritarian view of political conflict.

A major point of contention in the 2008 Republican Party presidential primary concerned which candidate qualified as the “true conservative” in that race. Of the candidates, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee and former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani seem to have been the most and least successful, respectively, at convincing primary voters and the media of their conservative bona fides. According to exit polling data from the first month of primary competition, January 2008, Huckabee won a plurality of self-described “very conservative” voters and Giuliani won a plurality of self-described “somewhat liberal” and “moderate” voters.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, media portrayals of Giuliani typically cast him as an ideological “moderate” or “liberal,”<sup>2</sup> while portrayals of Huckabee typically cast him as a “conservative,” albeit with some qualifications.<sup>3</sup>

Why did primary voters and the media view Huckabee as a conservative, and Giuliani as a liberal? I argue in this paper that Americans tend to define ideological labels primarily in terms of social policy views. Therefore, I would interpret Huckabee and Giuliani’s ideological reputations as consequences of their social conservatism and social

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved November 12, 2008, from <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/21660890>.

<sup>2</sup> For example: “Mr Giuliani is seen as a liberal” (Balogh 2007); “[Giuliani] is vulnerable to accusations that he is too liberal for many Republicans” (Spillius 2007); “[Giuliani is a] pro-choice, pro-gun control, pro-gay rights moderate” (Saltonstall 2007).

<sup>3</sup> For example: “[Huckabee is] a seemingly novel mix of moral conservatism and economic populism” (Grainger 2008); “when it comes to foreign affairs he sometimes sounds almost liberal” (Kirkpatrick 2007); “Huckabee is running as a sort of New Republican, a self-described conservative who has a history of proposals that some in his home state considered moderate or even liberal” (Kranish 2007).

liberalism, respectively. Comparing their stances on the three major policy dimensions – economic, foreign, and social policy – supports this interpretation.

In terms of economic and foreign policy, Giuliani’s conservative credentials never were seriously challenged during the primary campaign. In contrast, the Club for Growth sponsored television advertisements denouncing Huckabee as a “tax-and-spend-liberal” (Conroy 2007) and Republican rival Fred Thompson accused him of espousing “liberal foreign policies” and “blaming America first” (Nason 2007).

Only in terms of social policy did the candidates’ views align with their general ideological reputations. Giuliani held moderate to liberal views on a number of core social issues, including abortion, gay rights, gun control, and illegal immigration. Huckabee, on the other hand, was pro-life, opposed to gay marriage and civil unions, and he favored teaching Creationism in public schools. Interestingly, though, many conservative elites attacked Huckabee for his stances on social policies not closely associated with religious values; they accused him of being soft on crime and illegal immigration, and insufficiently opposed to gun control.

Giuliani, then, was accepted as solidly conservative on two major policy dimensions (economic and foreign policy) while Huckabee was accepted as solidly conservative only on a subset of one major policy dimension (social policy). That Huckabee was reputed to be exceptionally conservative on the whole, and Giuliani exceptionally liberal, suggests that social policy most influenced ideological perceptions of these candidates. This paper details empirical and theoretical considerations favoring such an interpretation, then empirically tests whether, and why, social policy most influences individuals’ conceptualizations of ideological labels.

## Literature

Despite the American public's demonstrated lack of ideological sophistication (Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960; Converse 1964; Levitin and Miller 1979; Lewis-Beck, Jacoby, Norpoth, and Weisberg 2008; Luttbeg and Gant 1984), ideological self-identification has proven to be one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of political behaviors and attitudes such as vote choice (Jost 2006; Levitin and Miller 1979), candidate evaluations (Zaller 1992), and policy preferences (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Jacoby 1991). Additionally, the ideological location of voters and candidates is central to spatial theories of voting behavior such as rational choice theory (Downs 1957) and the directional theory of issue voting (Rabinowitz and MacDonald 1989).

Given ideology's tremendous empirical and theoretical significance for the study of political behavior, it is surprising that little scholarly attention has been devoted in recent years to understanding how individuals conceptualize ideological labels such as "conservative" and "liberal," and how they come to perceive some candidates as more ideologically extreme than others. Indeed, empirical analyses of ideological conceptualization are confined almost entirely to several studies from the late 1970s and 1980s, a political era that preceded recent increases in the public's awareness of ideological concepts and dramatic changes in the national political environment. Also, these studies do not analyze how individual-level psychological factors, most notably authoritarianism, might influence conceptualizations of ideological labels and perceptions of candidate ideology.

## **Previous Studies of Ideological Conceptualization**

Conover and Feldman (1981), Luttbeg and Gant (1985), and Sanders (1986) analyze conceptualizations of ideological labels using open-ended responses to the following questions from the 1978 and 1980 American National Election Studies (ANES):

People have different things in mind when they say someone's political views are liberal or conservative. We'd like to know more about this. Let's start with liberal. What sort of thing do you have in mind when you say that someone's political views are liberal? And, what do you have in mind when you say that someone's political views are conservative?

Conover and Feldman and Luttbeg and Gant find that ANES respondents most often define ideological labels in terms of attitudes toward change; liberals are viewed as accepting of change and conservatives are viewed as resistant to change. Sanders, using a different coding scheme, classifies the plurality of respondents as defining both ideological labels primarily in terms of "General Philosophy."

While these studies indicate that individuals usually define ideological labels in terms of abstract concepts, they also find that individuals often define ideological labels in terms of specific policies and policy dimensions. In terms of policy dimensions, Conover and Feldman find that liberals define liberalism and conservatism primarily in terms of "recent social issues," while Luttbeg and Gant and Sanders find that respondents define ideological labels primarily in terms of economic policy.

Conover and Feldman, as well as Sanders, also study more directly the relationship between policy dimensions and ideological conceptualization by regressing ideological self-identification on policy positions. Conover and Feldman find that

respondents' social policy and economic policy preferences significantly predict ideological self-identification, although social policy preferences cease to be significant after controlling for liberal and conservative feeling thermometers. Sanders finds that social policy preferences best predict ideological self-identification for the plurality of respondents who define ideological labels primarily in terms of general philosophy, ahead of economic policy preferences and even party identification. Social policy preferences also prove to be the strongest predictor of ideological self-identification for respondents defining ideological labels primarily in terms of social policy, and they are only slightly less predictive than economic policy preferences for respondents defining ideological labels primarily in terms of economic policy.

Only in the last few years have scholars begun to revisit the study of ideological conceptualization. Zumbrennen and Gangl (2008) analyze the relative impact of social and economic conservatism on conservative self-identification and issue preferences. Based on the results of an original survey and the 2004 ANES, they conclude that the impact of economic attitudes, measured separately as "limited government conservatism" and "market conservatism," "pales before the powerful role of culturally conservative beliefs" in shaping conservative identification (216). However, these results are limited by Zumbrennen and Gangl's use of abstract attitudes toward government activity, rather than actual policy preferences, to predict self-identification among conservatives only.

Feldman and Johnston's (2009) study of the dimensionality of ideological self-identification also sheds valuable light on the topic of ideological conceptualization. Using a factor mixture model, Feldman and Johnston find that 45% of 2000 ANES respondents base their ideological self-identification primarily on economic *and* social

policy, 33% on social policy, and 22% on economic policy. While highly informative and methodologically rigorous, this study tests the effects of only two policy domains, the contents of which reflect the limited range of relevant policy preference measures available in the ANES, particularly with respect to the social policy dimension.

There is ample reason to suspect that the perceived meaning of ideological labels has changed since the 1970s and 1980s, when the ANES collected data used in the studies most directly measuring the relationship between policy dimensions and conceptualizations of liberalism *and* conservatism. Numerous studies indicate that the American public has grown increasingly familiar with ideological concepts in recent years (e.g. Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Bennett 1995; Hetherington 2001). At the same time, there have been great changes in the content of political debate and the public's approach to interpreting political events, both potentially reshaping public conceptualizations of ideological labels. Specifically, the "Culture Wars" (Hunter 1991, Layman 2001) that emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s have made social policy a more salient feature of political conflict than in previous eras. Also during this time, Americans have become increasingly likely to interpret political events in terms of a clash between authoritarian and non-authoritarian values (Hetherington and Weiler 2009) – a clash that is perhaps most clearly evident in the "Culture Wars" just referenced.

### **Social Policy and Ideological Conceptualization**

The possibility that social policy most defines ideological labels is a matter of particular interest for this paper. In some ways, social policy would seem exceptionally *unlikely* to define ideological labels. First, social policy is a relatively recent addition to the political agenda, in comparison to economic or foreign policy (Carmines and Layman

1997; Scammon and Wattenberg 1970). Second, many of the most prominent social issues seem to invert traditional ideological orientations toward the appropriate size and role of government. Typically, scholars and pundits explain the distinction between liberalism and conservatism in terms of liberals' preference for a larger, more active government and conservatives' preference for a smaller, less active government.<sup>4</sup> Yet, in the case of the most salient social policies, such as abortion and gay rights, it is conservatives who advocate for government regulation and liberals who advocate for government restraint. The fact that liberals and conservatives align themselves on these issues in contradiction to their traditional principles suggests that ideological distinctions are not solely based on attitudes toward the appropriate size and role of government. This traditional interpretation of ideological distinctions would be undermined further, perhaps fundamentally, by evidence indicating that the social policies *least* amenable to that interpretation *most* define ideological labels.

It is important to note, though, that not all issues typically categorized within the social policy dimension fit the preceding description. In fact, I argue in this paper that the social policy dimension, as conceptualized typically in scholarly research and popular discourse, seems to conflate two distinct groups of issues likely to differ in their

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<sup>4</sup> For example, Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson (1995) describe their macroideological Domestic Policy Mood measure as being “properly interpreted as left versus right – more specifically, as global preference for a larger, more active government as opposed to a smaller, more passive one across the sphere of all domestic policy controversies (548).” Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the Domestic Policy Mood measure fails to capture attitudes toward the quintessential social policy: abortion (see their Footnote 14).

relevance to ideological meaning. The social policies most commonly cited in the relevant literature are abortion and gay rights; every enumeration of social policies I encountered in my research included abortion, and gay rights was included nearly as often, particularly in more recent works. These issues fit clearly my description of many social policies as inverting traditional liberal and conservative preferences for government activity. Other issues commonly attributed to the social policy dimension, on the other hand, are entirely consistent with traditional liberal and conservative attitudes toward the size and role of government. For instance, conservatives tend to prefer minimal government intervention, and liberals tend to prefer substantial government intervention, when it comes to gun control and Affirmative Action. Interestingly, these same social issues also differ in terms of their relevance to the role of religion in public life. Opponents of abortion and gay rights, for example, regularly invoke Judeo-Christian doctrines as the bases for their positions. The same cannot be said for other social issues such as gun control and Affirmative Action.

Grouping both types of social policy within the same dimension is likely to obscure important differences between their effects on ideological conceptualization. A major objective of this paper is to test empirically whether individuals perceive the two categories of social issues differently in terms of their relevance to ideological conceptualization. In doing so, this paper provides valuable insight into the conceptual coherence of the social policy dimension, as commonly characterized, and the relative impact of different types of social policy on conceptualizations of ideological labels.

Although it might seem unlikely that social policies – particularly social policies closely associated with religious values and inverting traditional ideological orientations

toward the appropriate size and role of government – would most define ideological labels, there is much evidence in the Political Science literature to suggest that this is the case. Numerous empirical studies indicate that social policies are exceptionally amenable to ideological conceptualization. First, ideological constraint is greater for social policy than for any other policy dimension (Converse and Markus 1979; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). Second, individuals recognize liberal and conservative positions on social policies more readily than for any other policy dimension (Jacoby 1995; Levitin and Miller 1979). Third, self-described liberals and conservatives have proven more polarized on social policy than on any other policies (Robinson 1984). Finally, as detailed above, Conover and Feldman (1981), Sanders (1986), and Zumbrennen and Gangl (2008), all find that social policy influences ideological definitions more than any other policy dimension.

### **Authoritarianism and Ideological Conceptualization**

In addition to measuring the relative influence of various policy dimensions on ideological conceptualization, this analysis also seeks to determine *why* some individuals define ideological labels primarily in terms of a given policy dimension. Such analysis is lacking in previous studies of ideological conceptualization, and this limits scholars' understanding of individual-level variation in ideological conceptualization and the contextual factors influencing more widespread shifts in the public's interpretation and application of ideological labels.

Recent studies in the political psychology literature point to a critical link between ideology and a variety of psychological and personality factors. A number of psychological factors have been shown to influence ideological self-identification, including those falling under the umbrellas of uncertainty avoidance and threat

management (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway 2003a; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway 2003b; Jost, Napier, Thorisdottir, Gosling, Palfai, and Ostafin 2007). Scholars also have documented a compelling link between several of the Big Five personality traits and ideological identification, in the United States (Carney, Jost, Gosling, and Potter 2008; Gerber, Huber, Doherty, Dowling, and Ha 2010) and in Europe (Thoridsdottir, Jost, Liviatan, and Shrout 2007).

Given that psychological and personality factors have been shown to significantly influence ideological self-identification, it is quite plausible that such factors also influence the ways in which individuals conceptualize and apply ideological labels more generally. In this paper, I test the role of authoritarianism in shaping conceptualizations and applications of ideological labels. Specifically, I propose that more authoritarian individuals are most likely to define ideological labels primarily in terms of the social policy dimension, particularly social policies closely associated with religious values.

Authoritarianism has proven to be one of the most influential concepts in the academic literature on personality and political psychology, beginning decades ago with the publication of *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford 1950). Despite its alarming, and often misunderstood, label, authoritarianism is quite common in the American public; slightly less than a majority of 2004 ANES respondents scored at the two highest levels of authoritarianism, while only a quarter scored at its two lowest levels (Hetherington and Weiler 2009). Authoritarianism also has a substantial impact on political behavior in the general public; Lavine, Lodge, and Freitas (2005) describe authoritarianism as “a core political predisposition, on a par with party identification and political ideology as a lens through which the political world is

perceived and evaluated” (237). In fact, Hetherington and Weiler, in a recent comprehensive study, present impressive evidence that authoritarianism has come to structure inter-party conflict in recent years, through a “worldview evolution” similar to Carmines and Stimson’s (1989) concept of an issue evolution. Hetherington and Weiler demonstrate that authoritarianism, as measured by four child-rearing values included in the 1992, 2000, and 2004 ANES, has become a statistically significant predictor of policy preferences, party identification, voter turnout, and primary and general election vote choice recently, among Republicans and Democrats, alike.

Much like authoritarianism has been shown to structure other important aspects of political behavior and attitudes, I argue in this paper that authoritarianism also significantly influences the way in which individuals conceptualize and apply ideological labels. In particular, I argue that authoritarians are most likely to conceptualize ideological labels primarily in terms of social policies closely associated with religious values. Why? First, consider that Hetherington and Weiler explain authoritarianism’s impact on political behavior in terms of its implications for resisting new information that might challenge preexisting attitudes; authoritarians tend to make political judgments based on its implications for a perceived conflict between their values and other individuals’ distinct, often threatening, set of values. Values associated with religiosity, or aversion to it, likely constitute the most significant set of preexisting attitudes that would cause resistance to new information, since they tend to become deeply engrained at an early age and retain great personal significance throughout life. Therefore, issues closely associated with religious values should most clearly and strongly evoke a sense of

value conflict that would lead authoritarians to define ideological labels, one of the most salient means of political demarcation, primarily in terms of such issues.

Indeed, religiously-themed social issues best exhibit the characteristics associated with an authoritarian worldview. Opinions on such issues, particularly abortion, have proven to be exceptionally stable, and therefore resistant to new information, over time (Adams 1997; Converse and Markus 1979; Goren 2004). Also, researchers regularly characterize them as uniquely gut-level issues guided by stable personal values (e.g. Adams 1997, 729). What is more, Hetherington and Weiler trace the beginning of the authoritarianism-based worldview evolution to the “culture war” controversies of the early 1990s that are most commonly associated with religious social policies such as abortion and gay rights. Finally, the authoritarianism dimension that these authors construct and test, with great predictive success, comprises mostly issues typically categorized within the social policy dimension, including civil rights, women’s rights, gay rights, and illegal immigration. Thus, it is quite reasonable to suspect that Americans’ emerging tendency to see the political world as a contest between authoritarian values, as Hetherington and Weiler posit, leads them to define ideology today primarily in terms of social policy, and particularly social policy closely associated with religious values.

To the extent that ideological comprehension has increased in recent years while the political environment has undergone significant changes, as indicated by the research herein discussed, it seems likely that ideological conceptualizations might have changed since the 1970s and 1980s, when the data used in the most influential studies of this topic were collected. In order to provide an updated and methodologically diverse contribution to this literature, and to evaluate authoritarianism’s role in influencing ideological

conceptualization, in this paper I test a series of relevant hypotheses using data from two original laboratory experiments. In particular, I seek to determine which policy dimension, if any, most influences conceptualizations of liberalism and conservatism, and whether authoritarianism significantly influences how individuals use policy dimensions to define ideological labels.

Of course, some scholars would argue that symbolic groups, not issues, truly shape ideological meaning (see Conover and Feldman 1981). However, empirical evidence and intuition would suggest that policies *must* shape ideological meaning to some considerable degree, and policy dimensions are capable of capturing a comprehensive array of substantive and symbolic factors. For instance, evaluations of the economic policy dimension are likely to reflect specific policy preferences as well as attitudes toward symbolic groups associated with economic policy, including business interests, labor unions, and social classes. Thus, while policy dimensions alone do not define ideological labels for the mass public, they are certain to contribute substantially to ideological conceptualization while also absorbing much of the symbolic content closely associated with them.

### **Hypotheses and Methodology**

Drawing upon the theoretical and empirical literature discussed above, this paper tests four hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 states that the social policy dimension most influences conceptualizations of ideological labels. This hypothesis is qualified by Hypothesis 2, however, which states that the social policies most influencing ideological conceptualization are those closely associated with religious values and inverting

traditional ideological orientations toward the size and role of government. Other social policies are conceptually distinct and do not tend to shape ideological conceptualizations.

Additionally, this paper provides an important opportunity to test previous findings that different “criterial referents” primarily define liberalism and conservatism (Conover and Feldman 1981; Kerlinger 1984). If, in fact, individuals tend to conceptualize liberalism and conservatism primarily in terms of different substantive considerations, it might be the case that Hypotheses 1 and 2 apply only to conceptualizations of liberalism and not conservatism, or *vice versa*. While quite plausible, I see no theoretical basis, *prima facie*, for hypothesizing that different policy dimensions should define one ideological label and not the other. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 states that the social policy dimension, in particular social policies closely associated with religious values, primarily defines liberalism *and* conservatism.

Finally, Hypothesis 4 posits a causal mechanism for conceptualizing ideological labels primarily in terms of social policy: authoritarianism. Specifically, this hypothesis states that, as authoritarianism increases, participants become more likely to define ideological labels primarily in terms of the religious social policy dimension.

I test these four hypotheses using data from two original laboratory experiments. My objective in Study 1 is to provide an initial evaluation of the relationship between policy dimensions and ideological labeling, and to determine whether ideological perceptions differ between candidates associated with religiously-themed social policies (e.g. abortion, same-sex marriage, school prayer) and candidates associated with social policies that are not religiously-themed (e.g. gun control, illegal immigration, Affirmative Action). Study 2 provides a more comprehensive examination of ideological

conceptualization, by presenting each participant with candidates representing all four policy dimensions – economic, foreign, secular social, and religious social policy – and testing those dimensions’ relative influence in defining ideological labels. By eliminating the social policy manipulation included in Study 1 and expanding the number of participants in this experiment, Study 2 also enables me to test with appropriate statistical power the causal influence of authoritarianism in shaping ideological conceptualizations.

In addition to providing methodological diversity to the heretofore survey-based study of ideological conceptualization, an experimental approach is valuable because it allows researchers to control participants’ information environment, thereby isolating the manipulated variables’ effects and maximizing causal inference. To this end, the experiments herein described included stimuli featuring fictional candidates as the targets of ideological evaluation, ideological evaluations were obtained at the experiment’s outset to avoid possible priming effects, and the information presented to participants was held constant across conditions, except for information pertaining to the experimental manipulations. Thus, differences in ideological evaluations should be attributable only to the experimental manipulations and not to confounding information such as previous familiarity with the targets of evaluation or question order effects.

### **Experimental Design: Study 1**

Study 1 presented participants with a hypothetical election scenario featuring three fictional candidates competing for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. Participants were told that each candidate discussed many issues on the campaign trail,

but that he tended to emphasize a particular set of issues for which he was known best.<sup>5</sup>

Participants then were presented with three policy positions taken by each candidate, corresponding in each case to the economic, foreign, or social policy dimension.<sup>6</sup>

Study 1 uses a 2 (secular v. religious social policy candidate) x 2 (liberal v. conservative candidates) x 6 (order of candidate presentation), between-subjects factorial design. The first experimental manipulation is designed to test Hypothesis 2 by randomly assigning participants to one of two social policy conditions. For this condition, participants read about an election featuring either a candidate emphasizing social policies closely associated with religious values (herein called religious social policies), *or* a candidate emphasizing social policies not closely associated with religious values (herein called secular social policies). The economic and foreign policy candidates' positions did not vary between social policy conditions.

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<sup>5</sup> Specifically, participants were told: "Suppose three candidates are running for a seat in the United States House of Representatives. The candidates discuss many issues during the campaign, but each candidate is known primarily for a specific set of issues that he tends to emphasize on the campaign trail. Next you will read about the positions emphasized by each of the Congressional candidates. You will then be asked to answer some questions related to the candidates and their policy positions." The exact positions attributed to each candidate are provided in this paper's appendix.

<sup>6</sup> I chose the economic, foreign, and social policy dimensions because they are logically distinguishable, capture salient political divisions, and are used throughout the literature (e.g. Guth, Kellstedt, Smidt, and Green 2006; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; Sanders 1986).

The second experimental manipulation is designed to test Hypothesis 3 by randomly assigning participants to one of two candidate ideology conditions. The first group of participants read about an election featuring three candidates taking liberal positions on each policy dimension, while the second group of participants read about an election featuring three candidates taking conservative positions on each policy dimension. This manipulation enables me to test separately how participants use the policy dimensions to define liberalism versus conservatism, based on whether they are evaluating the ideologies of three liberal candidates or three conservative candidates.

The third experimental manipulation is designed to capture potential order effects on participants' evaluations of candidate ideology. To this end, I randomly varied the candidate names and the order of presentation associated with each policy dimension. With three candidates in each election scenario, there were six possible orders in which the candidates could appear. As expected, though, the results of Study 1 do not differ significantly as a result of name and order effects. Therefore, I exclude this manipulation from subsequent analyses and do not include it in Study 2.

This experiment's key methodological challenge was designing measures capable of capturing the relative impact of each policy dimension on participants' conceptualizations of liberalism or conservatism. To do this, I directly elicited participants' perceptions of which policy dimension, as embodied by a candidate defined entirely in terms of his emphasis on policies contained within a particular dimension, represented his ideological category *most completely*, or to the fullest degree. Since participants were presented with either three liberal candidates or three conservative candidates, they should have recognized each candidate as fitting his appropriate

ideological label to some degree.<sup>7</sup> However, if participants defined ideological labels primarily in terms of a particular policy dimension, it is reasonable to expect that they would have identified the candidate embodying that policy dimension as representing his ideological label to a greater degree than the other candidates.<sup>8</sup>

Two items included in the experimental questionnaire measured participants' perceptions of the degree to which the candidates represented their ideological labels. First, participants were asked to place the candidates on a standard seven-point ideological scale; second, participants were asked to choose the most liberal or conservative candidate in their particular election scenario.<sup>9</sup> I use both measures to evaluate perceived candidate ideology in the analyses that follow.

Why, one might ask, was the ideological scale not sufficient? The reason is that participants could – and several, in fact, did – place multiple candidates at the same point on the ideological scale. From such responses, it is impossible to determine which, if any, candidate participants perceived to be the most ideologically extreme. Of course, it could

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<sup>7</sup> Indeed, participants placed the individual candidates on the appropriate side of the ideological scale 69.3% of the time in Study 1, and 68.3% of the time in Study 2. In both studies, then, this manipulation appears to have been largely successful.

<sup>8</sup> For brevity, I refer to the candidate that participants view as fitting his ideological label to the greatest degree as the “most ideologically extreme candidate.” This designation should be interpreted in terms of the *degree to which a candidate represents his ideological label*, and not as a statement that the candidate is ideologically radical.

<sup>9</sup> The candidate selected as the most liberal (conservative) was coded as the most ideologically extreme for participants in the liberal (conservative) candidates condition.

have been the case that participants placed candidates at the same point on the ideological scale because they perceived them all to be ideologically identical. If so, then the second, forced choice, measure should have elicited essentially random responses, with no candidate consistently being selected as most extreme. If, however, participants *did* perceive ideological differences across the candidates but failed to indicate this through scale placements, then a pattern should have emerged in favor of a particular candidate being selected as most ideologically extreme. Indeed, I find a clear pattern of results in the forced choice measure that is consistent with that of the scale placement measure.

### **Results: Study 1**

One hundred sixteen undergraduate students from [deleted for anonymity] University participated in Study 1, in Summer 2008, in exchange for extra credit points in a Political Science course. Sixty-one percent of participants were males, 16% were non-whites, 53% were Republicans, 53% were conservatives, 50% were Political Science majors, and ages ranged from 18 to 60 years old (with a mean age of 23).

The results from Study 1 provide striking empirical support for Hypotheses 1 and 2.<sup>10</sup> As expected, participants identified the social policy candidate most strongly with his appropriate ideological label, and this finding holds *only* for participants reading about a candidate emphasizing social policies closely associated with religious values. Table I details participants' ideological perceptions of each candidate, using the scale placement and forced choice ideology measures and comparing results from the full sample with those from the two social policy candidate conditions.

[Insert Table I here]

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<sup>10</sup> All analyses presented in this paper are conducted using STATA Version 9.

Table I's first column presents the mean ideological scale placement of each candidate, standardized to range from low to high ideological extremity.<sup>11</sup> The social policy candidate's mean scale placement is higher than that of the economic or foreign policy candidates, and in both cases the differences are statistically significant, according to difference of means tests.

However, these differences are not apparent in both social policy conditions. The three candidates' mean ideological scale placements do not differ significantly at any point in the secular social policy condition, ranging only between 5.00 and 5.18 on the 1-7 scale. In stark contrast, participants assigned to the religious social policy condition place the social policy candidate significantly higher on the ideological scale than the economic and foreign policy candidates: 1.30 higher than the former and 1.01 higher than the latter, on average. Clearly, participants' ideological perceptions of the social policy candidate differ substantially depending on whether that candidate associated himself with religious versus secular social policies. Moreover, the differences in ideological perception are entirely consistent with Hypothesis 2.

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<sup>11</sup> Specifically, scale placements ranged from -1 (least congruent with the candidate's appropriate ideological label) to +1 (most congruent with the candidate's appropriate ideological label). Thus, candidates in the liberal candidates condition are coded +1 if participants place them at the "extremely liberal" position on the ideological scale and -1 if participants place them at the "extremely conservative" position. Likewise, candidates in the conservative condition are coded +1 if participants label them "extremely conservative" and -1 if participants label them "extremely liberal."

For the forced choice ideology measure, candidates are labeled most ideologically extreme if participants select them as the most liberal candidate in the liberal candidates condition or the most conservative candidate in the conservative candidates condition. Table I's second column shows that a majority of participants judge the social policy candidate most ideologically extreme according to this measure. Fifty-seven percent of participants in the full sample select the social policy candidate as most ideologically extreme, a percentage that is significantly different from that selecting the economic or foreign policy candidates as most extreme, according to difference of proportions tests.

When comparing candidates in the secular and religious social policy conditions, the results of the forced choice measure closely mirror those of the scale placement measure. Participants are about equally likely to select any of the three candidates as most ideologically extreme in the secular social policy condition, and these proportions are not significantly different in any case. In contrast, participants are overwhelmingly likely to select the social policy candidate as most ideologically extreme in the religious social policy condition. More than three-quarters of participants, 77%, select the religious social policy candidate as most ideologically extreme in this condition, a proportion significantly greater than that selecting the economic or foreign policy candidate as most ideologically extreme. Once more, these results show clearly that participants perceive the social policy candidate's ideology quite differently depending on whether he emphasizes religious versus secular social policies, and these differences are entirely consistent with Hypothesis 2. The social policy dimension, as it is typically conceptualized, therefore seems to conflate two empirically distinct policy dimensions that have very different implications for ideological evaluation.

While Study 1 provides very clear support for Hypotheses 1 and 2, the evidence regarding Hypothesis 3 is somewhat mixed. According to Hypothesis 3, the same criterial referents, in this case policy dimensions, should primarily define liberalism and conservatism. Indeed, a majority of participants select the social policy candidate as most conservative in the conservative candidates condition (52%) and most liberal in the liberal candidates condition (62%). The difference in percentages is not statistically significant according to one-way ANOVA analysis,  $F(1, 110) = 1.24, p = 0.267$ . Thus, it appears that the same criterial referent most commonly defines liberalism and conservatism: the social policy dimension.

However, Study 1's results also indicate that the two other policy dimensions vary in terms of their relevance to ideological labeling; economic policy defines liberalism more than conservatism, and foreign policy defines conservatism more than liberalism. The percentage of participants selecting the economic policy candidate as most liberal in the liberal candidates condition (28%) is significantly higher than the percentage selecting him as most conservative in the conservative candidates condition (12%),  $F(1, 110) = 4.70, p = 0.032$ . Likewise, the percentage of participants selecting the foreign policy candidate as most conservative in the conservative candidates condition (36%) is significantly higher than the percentage selecting him as most liberal in the liberal candidates condition (9%),  $F(1, 110) = 12.07, p = 0.001$ . There is some evidence, then, that certain policy dimensions are more relevant in defining one ideological label than another. However, the social policy dimension most defines ideological labels in general, according to this analysis, and it is not significantly more or less relevant in defining liberalism versus conservatism.

Study 1 provides valuable evidence supporting Hypotheses 1-3. In particular, this evidence indicates that social issues closely associated with religious values most influence conceptualizations of liberalism and conservatism, despite the fact that those issues invert traditional ideological preferences on the appropriate size and role of government. These findings are striking, but further analysis is needed in order to comprehensively evaluate this paper's hypotheses.

For Study 2, I conducted an experiment capable of validating and expanding upon Study 1's findings. Having established the conceptual and empirical distinctiveness of the religious and secular social policy dimensions, in Study 2 I presented each participant with candidates representing all four major policy dimensions. Eliminating the social policy manipulation and increasing the sample size for Study 2 allows me to test with appropriate statistical power the hypothesized causal mechanism for conceptualizing ideological labels primarily in terms of religious social policy: authoritarianism.

### **Experimental Design: Study 2**

Study 2 participants were presented with a hypothetical election scenario closely mirroring that of Study 1, but differing in two important respects. First, if it were the case, as I expected, that Study 1 participants responded differently to the religious and secular social policy candidates by providing statistically distinguishable evaluations of those candidates' ideologies, this would indicate that Study 1 participants were not being presented with the full range of policy dimensions relevant to ideological conceptualization. Therefore, to provide a more rigorous test of Hypothesis 2, including all four policy dimensions and directly comparing religious and secular social policy's effects on ideological conceptualization, Study 2 presented participants with a

hypothetical election scenario featuring four candidates, each representing a distinct policy dimension: economic, foreign, secular social, or religious social policy.

Second, I modified several descriptions of the candidates' policy stances from Study 1, for the purpose of enhancing Study 2's external validity. In several cases, the language used to describe the candidates' positions was modified to more realistically represent the positions taken by real-world candidates, while in some cases new, more salient issues replaced less salient issues used in Study 1.<sup>12</sup>

Study 2 uses a single-factor between-subjects design, with two conditions; specifically, participants were randomly assigned to read about an election featuring either four liberal candidates or four conservative candidates. Retaining this manipulation from Study 1 was crucial to providing the most rigorous test of Hypothesis 3. In particular, the fact that Study 2 includes four policy dimensions relevant to ideological conceptualization increases the chances that participants would use different criterial referents to define liberalism and conservatism.

To test Hypothesis 4, I also included in Study 2 a series of questions measuring authoritarianism and other factors likely to influence the relationship between policy dimensions and evaluations of candidate ideology. In this section, I analyze the results of a logistic regression model predicting whether participants selected the religious social policy candidate (coded one) or any of the other three candidates (coded zero) as most ideologically extreme. Authoritarianism is the key independent variable in this model, and I also control for several relevant demographic and political variables.

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<sup>12</sup> Again, this paper's appendix includes the exact positions attributed to each candidate.

Authoritarianism is measured using the standard four-item battery of child rearing values included in the ANES and most authoritarianism studies (e.g. Hetherington and Weiler 2009), which requires participants to choose whether an authoritarian or non-authoritarian value is more important for raising children (e.g. obedience versus curiosity). Preference for each authoritarian value is coded one and preference for each non-authoritarian value is coded zero. Scores are summed to create a multi-item measure of authoritarianism ranging from 0 to 4, and then standardized to range from -1 to +1 so that authoritarianism's effects can be directly compared to those of other significant variables included in the logistic regression model.

Political control variables include party identification and ideological self-placement, each measured with the standard seven-point scales used in the ANES and throughout the Political Science literature. Controlling for party identification and ideology is particularly relevant because there is evidence that political groups differ in the way that they conceptualize ideological labels (see Conover and Feldman 1981).

Demographic control variables include participants' gender, race/ethnicity, and religiosity.<sup>13</sup> Each of these characteristics reasonably could be expected to influence ideological conceptualizations, due to the exceptional importance of some policy dimensions to specific groups of people. For instance, abortion policy's particular relevance to women and religious participants might lead them to define ideological labels primarily in terms of the religious social policy dimension, and Affirmative

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<sup>13</sup> Please see this paper's appendix for a detailed explanation of how these and other variables described in this section are coded.

Action's particular relevance to racial and ethnic minorities might lead those participants to define ideology primary in terms of secular social policy.

Finally, since previous research indicates that ideological comprehension varies with sophistication levels (e.g. Knight 1985), participants report their education level and answer several questions measuring their political knowledge.

### **Results: Study 2**

One hundred thirty-four undergraduate students from [deleted for anonymity] University participated in Study 2, in Winter 2009, in exchange for extra credit points in a Political Science course. Fifty-nine percent of participants were males, 18% were non-whites, 49% were Democrats, 49% were liberals, 19% were Political Science majors, and ages ranged from 18 to 54 years old (with a mean of 21).

Study 2's results provide additional support for Hypothesis 2.<sup>14</sup> Once again, participants identify the religious social policy candidate most strongly with his appropriate ideological label, across both measures of candidate ideology. Table II's first column shows that the mean ideological scale placement of the religious social policy candidate is higher than that of any other candidate, and it is significantly different from the secular social policy and foreign policy candidates' mean placements. It is higher, but not significantly different, from that of the economic policy candidate, however.

[Insert Table II here]

Table II's second column shows that a plurality of participants identifies the religious social policy candidate as most ideologically extreme in the forced choice

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<sup>14</sup> Since Study 2 presented all participants with a religious social policy candidate *and* a secular social policy candidate, its results cannot be used to test Hypothesis 1 directly.

measure. Although the 38% of participants identifying him as such is a far cry from the 77% of participants doing so in Study 1, this percentage is significantly different from each of the other candidates' percentages.

These results further indicate that ideological labels tend to be defined primarily in terms of religious social policy. However, they are not as robust as the results from Study 1. What could account for the differences? First, Study 2 presented participants with one more candidate than in Study 1, thereby increasing each candidate's probability of being identified as most ideologically extreme in Study 2, by random chance alone. To the extent that any participants identify a candidate as most ideologically extreme by random chance alone, the percentages for each candidate should be lower in Study 2.

Second, the economic recession that materialized between Study 1 (June/July 2008) and Study 2 (March 2009) undoubtedly made economic policies much more salient to participants in the latter study. As a result of this dramatic change in participants' political environment, it should come as no surprise that the percentage of Study 2 participants defining ideological labels primarily in terms of economic policy was higher than in Study 1, and that this helped to decrease the percentage of Study 2 participants defining ideological labels primarily in terms of religious social policy. Actually, what seems most surprising about these results is that a plurality of participants *still* defined liberalism and conservatism primarily in terms of social policy, even in the face of a severe economic recession and a surge in the salience of economic policy.

Study 2's results also provide strong support for Hypothesis 3, which states that the same criterial referents, or policy dimensions, primarily define liberalism and conservatism. Once more, a majority of participants select the religious social policy

candidate as most conservative in the conservative candidates condition (42%) and most liberal in the liberal candidates condition (34%), and the difference in percentages is not statistically significant,  $F(1, 133) = 0.88, p = 0.354$ . Unlike Study 1, however, there is no significant difference in the percentage of other candidates selected as most ideologically extreme in the liberal versus conservative candidate conditions. Thus, there is no evidence in Study 2 that different criterial referents primarily define liberalism and conservatism. The religious social policy candidate is most closely identified with both ideological labels, and the proportion of participants identifying him as such does not differ significantly when evaluating liberal versus conservative candidates.

The preceding evidence strongly supports my hypothesis that religious social policy most defines the liberal and conservative ideological labels. However, to this point it is not clear *why* individuals tend to conceptualize ideological labels in this way, and previous studies of ideological conceptualization offer little explanatory guidance. Table III presents the results of a logistic regression model predicting whether Study 2 participants identify the religious social policy candidate, or one of the other candidates, as most ideologically extreme (e.g. most conservative in the conservative candidates condition, or most liberal in the liberal candidates condition). As detailed above, the authoritarianism literature and the nature of the religious social policy dimension lead me to expect that more authoritarian individuals are significantly more likely to define ideological labels primarily in terms of religious social policy, even when controlling for the candidate ideology manipulation and relevant political and demographic factors.

[Insert Table III here]

The results presented in Table III provide strong support for authoritarianism's hypothesized causal role in shaping ideological conceptualization. The authoritarianism variable is statistically significant ( $p$ -value = 0.014), and it is positively signed. Thus, more authoritarian participants prove significantly more likely to identify the religious social policy candidate as the most conservative candidate in the conservative candidates condition or the most liberal candidate in the liberal candidates condition. What is more, none of the other variables in this model reach, or even approach, statistical significance. Most notably, the candidate ideology manipulation is not significant, and this provides additional support for Hypothesis 3.

To further explicate authoritarianism's role in shaping ideological conceptualization, Table IV presents the predicted probabilities of Study 2 participants identifying the religious social policy candidate as most ideologically extreme, at each level of authoritarianism. Holding all other model covariates at their mean values, the predicted probability of selecting the religious social policy candidate as most ideologically extreme increases in a sharp linear pattern, ranging from 0.14 for the least authoritarian participants to 0.61 for the most authoritarian participants.

[Insert Table IV here]

The results presented in Table III and Table IV provide strong evidence for the hypothesized causal role of authoritarianism in shaping ideological conceptualization. Even when controlling for religiosity, political knowledge, and other factors relevant to ideological evaluation and religious social policy, the most authoritarian participants have a greater than 60% probability of identifying the religious social policy candidate as most ideologically extreme among a field of four candidates. Considering these impressive

results, there is ample reason to believe that psychological factors contribute critically to the process of ideological conceptualization and evaluation. In particular, more authoritarian participants are significantly more likely to define ideological labels primarily in terms of the religious social policy dimension. This relationship, I argue, is attributable to the congruence between authoritarian worldviews and the exceptionally value-laden nature of debate over religious social policies such as abortion, gay marriage, and school prayer, each of which typically evoke deep-seated values that are exceptionally resistant to influence from new information and competing viewpoints.

### **Discussion**

This paper's findings have important implications for the study of ideology and authoritarianism. First, they indicate that traditional explanations of the distinction between liberalism and conservatism are incomplete and, in important ways, misguided. For many issues, such as abortion, gay marriage, and school prayer, liberals typically prefer government restraint and conservatives typically prefer government intervention. Remarkably, these positions, which are least consistent with traditional definitions of liberalism and conservatism, appear to exert the greatest influence over how individuals conceptualize ideological labels. As a result, I would argue that ideological differences no longer should be defined exclusively, or even primarily, in terms of attitudes toward the appropriate size and role of government. Instead, scholars should use a more nuanced definition of liberalism and conservatism, one that is capable of capturing more completely the range of issues and policy dimensions associated with these labels.

Second, typical characterizations of the social policy dimension appear, on logical and empirical grounds, to conflate two distinct sets of policies. Conceptually, social

policies can be distinguished on the basis of their association with religious values as well as their implications for government intervention. Empirically, Study 1 and Study 2 participants treat the religious and secular social policy dimensions as distinct, and the former is far more powerful in shaping conceptualizations of ideological labels.

Third, these studies provide little evidence to suggest that different policy dimensions most influence participants' conceptualizations of liberalism and conservatism. This finding is inconsistent with previous research indicating that individuals use different criterial referents to define ideological labels.

Finally, the finding that authoritarianism motivates individuals' tendency to conceptualize ideological labels primarily in terms of religious social policy recommends serious consideration of the argument presented by Hetherington and Weiler (2009) that an authoritarian-based worldview evolution now structures U.S. political competition. A promising avenue for future research would be to replicate this paper's experimental design while introducing a candidate representing the authoritarianism policy dimension, as defined by Hetherington and Weiler, to see whether participants, particularly authoritarians, define ideological labels primarily in terms of this dimension. Also, additional studies would be useful in identifying other psychological or personality factors potentially influencing conceptualizations and applications of ideological labels.

While the evidence supporting this paper's hypotheses is strong in many respects, due caution is in order. Given that I tested the hypotheses using data from non-representative, university undergraduate samples, some might argue it is inappropriate to draw generalized conclusions about ideological conceptualization throughout the public from these results (see Sears 1986), for two important reasons. First, by definition,

college students are well-educated and therefore more likely than the general public to understand ideological concepts (see Knight 1985). Therefore, students' evaluations of ideological labels might differ in important ways from typical members of the general public. While such differences are quite plausible, the experimental data suggest that they are unlikely. Political sophisticates are no more or less likely than non-sophisticates to identify the religious social policy candidate as most ideologically extreme in Study 1,  $F(1, 110) = 0.00, p = 0.950$ , or in Study 2,  $F(1, 132) = 0.15, p = 0.702$ . Also, Political Science majors are no more or less likely than non-majors to identify the religious social policy candidate as most ideologically extreme in Study 1,  $F(1, 110) = 0.71, p = 0.400$ , or in Study 2,  $F(1, 133) = 0.72, p = 0.398$ .

A second cause for concern in using an undergraduate sample for this analysis is that college students have a reputation for being more socially liberal than the general public. To the extent that this reputation is justified, participants might be more likely to define ideological labels primarily in terms of religious social policy because they have especially strong and distinctive views on those issues. Again, this argument is quite plausible, but the evidence does not suggest that it poses a significant threat to the generalizability of my findings.

Study 1 and Study 2 included several questions pertaining to participants' views on the policies associated with each candidate. Using gay marriage as an example, 41% of Study 1 participants agree with the statement that "Homosexual marriage should be legal everywhere in the United States" and 43% of Study 2 participants agree with the statement that "The federal government should recognize same-sex marriage as a constitutional right of all Americans." These percentages are similar to the 37.5% of 2008

ANES respondents saying gay marriage should be allowed in the United States, and the 40% of 2009 Gallup respondents saying likewise.<sup>15</sup> Also, 13% of Study 1 participants and 7% of Study 2 participants say the issue of gay marriage is “Extremely Important” to them, personally, while 23% and 28%, respectively, say the issue is “Very Important.” Thus, while participants differ from the general public in their views on religious social policy, participants do not regard such issues as exceptionally important and their differences from the general public do not appear dramatic enough to significantly threaten the generalizability of my findings.

Whatever its potential limitations, this paper contributes importantly to scholars’ understanding of ideological conceptualization. First, after years of this topic receiving little attention, this paper provides an updated analysis of ideological labeling capable of capturing significant changes in the political environment and the public’s understanding of ideological concepts during the intervening period.

Second, the finding that religious social policy most influences ideological conceptualizations undermines the traditional depiction of orientations toward government activity as central to defining liberalism and conservatism. Also, since the issues comprising the religious social policy dimension emerged only in the last four decades, this finding indicates that conceptualizations of ideological labels have changed substantially over time, and that they may change again in the future.

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<sup>15</sup> Retrieved December 10, 2010, from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/118378/majority-americans-continue-oppose-gay-marriage.aspx>.

Third, the finding that religious and secular social policies have distinct empirical, as well as conceptual, implications for ideological conceptualization, argues for treating them as separate policy dimensions, rather than components of one coherent dimension.

Finally, this paper provides unique insights into authoritarianism's role in shaping conceptualizations and applications of ideological labels. Whereas previous studies provide little guidance with respect to psychological factors' effects on ideological conceptualization, this analysis demonstrates that more authoritarian participants are significantly more likely to define ideological labels primarily in terms of the religious social policy dimension. In addition to improving political scientists' understanding of ideological conceptualization and its psychological determinants, this paper adds to a growing body of literature detailing authoritarianism's profound relevance to a variety of political behaviors and attitudes. Specifically in terms of ideology, previous studies show that authoritarianism significantly influences ideological self-identification. The analyses presented in this paper indicate that authoritarianism also plays a critical role in shaping the way that individuals conceptualize ideological labels and evaluate candidate ideology. Given ideology's tremendous theoretical and empirical significance within the political behavior literature, these findings should only encourage scholars to further investigate the importance of psychological factors, and authoritarianism in particular, in shaping essential aspects of political behavior including, but certainly not limited to, ideological evaluation.

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## Appendix

### Study 1 Stimulus (Liberal Candidates Condition):

- *John Samuels supports the following policies:* Substantially increasing taxes on businesses and individuals at most income levels; Sharply increasing government spending on programs such as unemployment and poverty assistance; giving employees much greater legal ability to form and join labor unions.
- *Tom Bryant supports the following policies:* Sharply decreasing military defense funding, particularly for the purpose of producing military weaponry; Forbidding the federal government from electronically monitoring telephone calls placed to U.S. citizens by suspected foreign terrorists; Committing the U.S. to greater levels of cooperation with the United Nations and other international institutions, as a way of responding to their recent disagreements over U.S. foreign policy.
- [Secular social candidate condition only] *Rick Phillips supports the following policies:* Providing all persons found to have immigrated to the United States illegally with the opportunity to obtain U.S. citizenship status; Enacting greater legal restrictions on individuals' ability to purchase and carry handguns; Expanding Affirmative Action programs for all federally funded agencies and institutions.
- [Religious social candidate condition only] *Rick Phillips supports the following policies:* Overturning federal laws that prevent homosexuals from getting married; Increasing women's access to legal abortions at all stages of pregnancy; Forbidding students from participating openly in prayer on public school grounds.

**Study 1 Stimulus (Conservative Candidates Condition):**

- *John Samuels supports the following policies:* Providing large tax cuts to businesses and individuals at all income levels; Sharply reducing government spending on programs such as unemployment and poverty assistance; Giving employers greater legal ability to discourage their employees from joining labor unions.
- *Tom Bryant supports the following policies:* Sharply increasing military defense funding, particularly for the purpose of producing military weaponry; Renewing legislation allowing the federal government to electronically monitor telephone calls placed to U.S. citizens by suspected foreign terrorists; Committing the U.S. to greater levels of independence from the United Nations and other international institutions, as a way of responding to their recent disagreements over U.S. foreign policy.
- [Secular social candidate condition only] *Rick Phillips supports the following policies:* Arresting and deporting all persons found to have immigrated to the United States illegally; Greatly easing legal restrictions on individuals' ability to purchase and carry handguns; Eliminating Affirmative Action programs for all federally funded agencies and institutions.
- [Religious social candidate condition only] *Rick Phillips supports the following policies:* Passing a Constitutional amendment banning homosexual marriage throughout the United States; Legally restricting women's access to abortions at all stages of pregnancy; Requiring public schools to allow time each day for students to participate openly in prayer.

**Study 2 Stimulus (Liberal Candidates Condition):**

- *John Samuels supports the following policies:* Increasing taxes on corporations and individuals earning \$100,000 or more in annual income; Sharply increasing the number of government programs aimed at providing financial aid to low-income people; Requiring the federal government to provide health insurance coverage for all Americans, even if that means restricting individuals' ability to choose between private insurance plans.
- *Rick Phillips supports the following policies:* Overturning federal laws aimed at discouraging same-sex marriage; Easing legal restrictions affecting women's access to abortion at all stages of pregnancy; Forbidding students from engaging openly in prayer on public school grounds.
- *Tom Bryant supports the following policies:* Decreasing the number of U.S. military personnel by 50%; Forbidding the federal government from monitoring the telephone calls of U.S. citizens suspected of involvement in terrorist activities; Increasing the United States' involvement in international diplomatic organizations such as the United Nations.
- *William Crane supports the following policies:* Providing citizenship status and government services to illegal immigrants already living in the United States; Increasing legal restrictions on individuals' ability to purchase and carry handguns; Expanding the use of Affirmative Action hiring practices for all federally funded agencies and institutions.

**Study 2 Stimulus (Conservative Candidates Condition):**

- *John Samuels supports the following policies:* Cutting taxes for corporations and individuals at all income levels; Sharply reducing the number of government programs aimed at providing financial aid to low-income people; Allowing individuals the freedom to purchase their own health insurance coverage, even if that means individuals who cannot afford coverage will go uninsured.
- *Rick Phillips supports the following policies:* Passing a Constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage; Legally restricting women's access to abortion at all stages of pregnancy; Requiring public schools to allow time each day for students to engage openly in prayer.
- *Tom Bryant supports the following policies:* Increasing the number of U.S. military personnel by 50%; Allowing the federal government to monitor the telephone calls of U.S. citizens suspected of involvement in terrorist activities; Reducing the United States' involvement in international diplomatic organizations such as the United Nations.
- *William Crane supports the following policies:* Arresting and deporting all illegal immigrants; Easing legal restrictions on individuals' ability to purchase and carry handguns; Ending the use of Affirmative Action hiring practices for all federally funded agencies and institutions.

**Candidate ideology:** Scale placement: “Where would you place [candidate name] on the ideological scale below?” Very liberal (1), Somewhat liberal (2), Slightly liberal (3), Neither conservative nor liberal (4), Slightly conservative (5), Somewhat conservative (6), Very conservative (7). Candidate placements are reverse-coded for participants in the liberal candidates condition, so that candidate placements ranged from least (1) to most (7) congruent with the candidates’ appropriate ideological label. Forced choice: “Now, which candidate would you say is the most politically liberal (conservative)?” The most liberal (conservative) candidate in the liberal (conservative) candidates condition is coded 1, and all other candidates are coded zero.

**Religiosity:** Religious attendance: Never (-1), Rarely (-0.33), Once a month (0.33), Once a week or More than once a week (1). Religious importance: Not important (-1), A little important (-0.5), Somewhat important (0), Very important (0.5), Extremely important (1). Scores are summed and then divided by two to create a religiosity index.

**Education:** College freshman (-1), sophomore (-0.33), junior (0.33), senior or other (1).

**Political knowledge:** 1) Vice President’s name; 2) Proportion of the House and Senate needed to override a presidential veto; 3) Majority party in the U.S. House; 4) More conservative party; 5) Government branch that determines laws’ constitutionality; 6) U.S. House Speaker’s name; 7) U.S. Chief Justice’s name; 8) U.S. Senate Majority Leader’s name; 9) U.S. Senate Minority Leader’s name. Responses are scored as correct (1) or incorrect (0), summed to create a ten-point scale, and normalized to range from -1 to +1.

## Tables

**TABLE I**                      **Study 1: Perceived Ideological Extremity of the Candidates**

<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>		
<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Mean Ideological Scale Placement</b>	<b>Forced Choice of Most Extreme Candidate</b>
<u>Full Sample</u>		
Economic Policy Candidate	4.86 <sup>a</sup> (0.148)	22 <sup>d</sup> 19.8%
Foreign Policy Candidate	4.94 <sup>a</sup> (0.151)	26 <sup>d</sup> 23.4%
Social Policy Candidate	5.44 (0.136)	63 56.8%
N	116	111
<u>Secular Social Policy Condition</u>		
Economic Policy Candidate	5.18 <sup>b</sup> (0.192)	16 <sup>e</sup> 29.1%
Foreign Policy Candidate	5.04 <sup>b</sup> (0.200)	19 <sup>e</sup> 34.6%
Social Policy Candidate	5.00 <sup>b</sup> (0.175)	20 <sup>e</sup> 36.4%
N	57	55
<u>Religious Social Policy Condition</u>		
Economic Policy Candidate	4.56 <sup>c</sup> (0.219)	6 <sup>f</sup> 10.7%
Foreign Policy Candidate	4.85 <sup>c</sup> (0.227)	7 <sup>f</sup> 12.5%
Social Policy Candidate	5.86 (0.193)	43 76.8%
N	59	56

Mean ideological scale placements are normalized to range from 1, very conservative (very liberal) in the liberal (conservative) candidates condition, to 7, very liberal (very conservative) in the liberal (conservative) candidates condition. Standard errors are in parentheses.

Forced choice statistics reflect the number and percentage of participants identifying that candidate as the most liberal (conservative) candidate in the liberal (conservative) candidates condition.

*Note:* Means and proportions *not* sharing the same superscript significantly differ from each other at the .05 significance level, according to difference of means and difference of proportion tests, respectively.

**TABLE II** **Study 2: Perceived Ideological Extremity of the Candidates**  
**Descriptive Statistics**

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Mean Ideological Scale Placement</b>	<b>Forced Choice of Most Extreme Candidate</b>
Economic Policy Candidate	5.17 <sup>ab</sup> (0.136)	35 <sup>c</sup> 26.1%
Foreign Policy Candidate	4.90 <sup>a</sup> (0.133)	19 <sup>c</sup> 14.2%
Secular Social Policy Candidate	4.90 <sup>a</sup> (0.149)	29 <sup>c</sup> 21.6%
Religious Social Policy Candidate	5.37 <sup>b</sup> (0.136)	51 38.1%
N	134	134

Mean ideological scale placements are normalized to range from 1, very conservative (very liberal) in the liberal (conservative) candidates condition, to 7, very liberal (very conservative) in the liberal (conservative) candidates condition. Standard errors are in parentheses.

Forced choice statistics reflect the number and percentage of participants identifying that candidate as the most liberal (conservative) candidate in the liberal (conservative) candidates condition.

*Note:* Means and proportions *not* sharing the same superscript significantly differ from each other at the .05 significance level, according to difference of means and difference of proportion tests, respectively.

**TABLE III Predicting Selection of the Most Ideologically Extreme Candidate**  
**Logistic Regression Estimates**

<b>Parameter</b>	<b>Selection: Religious Social Policy Candidate</b>
Candidate Ideology Manipulation	0.194 (0.190)
Party Identification	-0.275 (0.354)
Ideological Self-Placement	-0.435 (0.424)
Religiosity	0.241 (0.354)
Minority	-0.336 (0.283)
Female	0.272 (0.222)
Education	0.296 (0.259)
Political Knowledge	0.684 (0.492)
Authoritarianism	1.142* (0.465)
Constant	-0.865 (0.297)
N	134
Log-Likelihood	-82.220

*Note:* Entries are logistic regression coefficients, and standard errors are in parentheses.

\*Significant at the .05 confidence level.

For ease of interpretation, each variable has been standardized to range from -1 to +1.

The dependent variable represents whether participants select the religious social policy candidate as most liberal (conservative) in the liberal (conservative) candidates condition. It is coded 1 if participants select the religious social policy candidate as most ideologically extreme, and 0 if participants select the economic, foreign, or secular social policy candidate as most ideologically extreme.

**TABLE IV**      **Predicted Probabilities of Selecting the Religious Social Policy Candidate as Most Ideologically Extreme, by Authoritarianism**

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<b>Preferred Authoritarian Values</b>	<b>Predicted Probability</b>
0	0.139
1	0.222
2	0.335
3	0.472
4	0.612

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*Note:* Entries are predicted probabilities of selecting the religious social policy candidate as the most liberal (conservative) candidate in the liberal (conservative) candidates condition.

Authoritarianism is measured as the number of authoritarian, versus non-authoritarian, child-rearing values preferred by a participant. Authoritarian values include: respect for elders, over independence; obedience, over self-reliance; good manners, over curiosity; being well-behaved, over being considerate.

All Table III model covariates, except for authoritarianism, are held at their mean values in this analysis.