Empirical Evaluation of Political Ideology as Motivated Social Cognition

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"Any man who is under 30, and is not a liberal, has not heart; and any man who is over 30, and is not a conservative, has no brains."
-Sir Winston Churchill, 1874-1965

"A conservative is a man with two perfectly good legs who, however, has never learned how to walk forward."
-Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1882 - 1945

In 2003 Jost et al. published an extensive meta-analytical review of the literature pertaining to political ideology and personality. In their analysis they discovered nine psychological characteristics that have been correlated to political conservatism: fear of death, system instability, dogmatism and intolerance of ambiguity, openness to experience, tolerance of uncertainty, personal needs to achieve order, structure and closure, integrative complexity, fear of threat and loss, and self-esteem.

Although many conservatives, both academics and laypersons, have found these results unsettling and have criticized the group’s findings, few have expressed methodological concerns (Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Lindgren, 2003). Many critics have oversimplified the study to make it easier to attack (Rawls, 2003), but these attacks have not taken anything away from one of the original tenets of the project, “that it is a legitimate empirical issue as to whether there are demonstrable links between a clearly defined set of psychological needs, motives, and properties and the adoption of politically conservative attitudes.” (Jost et al., 2003, pg. 1, emphasis in original).

The disturbing political views America encountered in WWII initiated impressive studies of the psychological foundation of political ideology, specifically the authoritarian personality. (Adorno, 1950). Although the study of authoritarianism has continued to intrigue researchers, many have moved past studying such an extreme belief in an attempt to understand how more moderate ideologies are formed.
PSYCHOLOGY OF IDEOLOGY

Much of the work on personality and political ideology was originally done in support or critique of the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis that first discovered some of the correlations that Jost et al. discuss (Adorno, 1950; Rokeach, 1960; Tetlock, 1984, etc.). Researchers then found evidence of a rigidity of the left, and the extremist-as-ideologue hypothesis was born (Eysenck, 1954/1999; Greenberg & Jonas, 2003, Shils, 1954; Sidanius, 1984, 1985, etc.). While some of the relationships between personality and political beliefs can be explained by these theories, they fall short of shedding light on the many other connections that exist (Jost et al., 2003).

Jost et al.’s view of political conservatism as motivated social cognition surpasses these theories in its ability to explain the many different personality variables that have been consistently linked to political ideology. This perspective states that conservative political beliefs satisfy psychological needs that other ideologies can not. A person is motivated to hold a certain belief because that belief fits into his or her psychological framework more comfortably than others would. That is not to say that all political beliefs are held simply because they fulfill psychological needs, but rather that having certain personality characteristics will increase the likelihood that one will hold conservative beliefs.

It is important to explicitly state that this does not mean that the beliefs are illogical, immoral, incorrect, or unprincipled; it simply means that these beliefs serve a psychological function. It should also be mentioned that there are many people that hold conservative views for a plethora of reasons not related to the psychological variables we are discussing. The objective of this research is to better understand how people form their beliefs, but it is clear that no study can account for all behavior.
PSYCHOLOGY OF IDEOLOGY

It is our goal to implement an empirically sound project that specifically tests for the variables that have been shown to correlate with conservatism. This project is useful because unlike the other studies, which discuss only one of these variables, we will be testing all of them together. At the same time we will be exploring the implications of the original work by extending it to occupational preference in a hope to demonstrate the complex interaction between personality and ideology.

PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS

The variables that Jost et al. identified came from an intensive review of the literature pertaining to the psychological underpinnings of political psychology. Although a complete discussion of the vast articles they evaluated is beyond the scope of this paper, it is necessary to take a moment to develop the theoretical foundations of this study. Note that at times they discuss studies that examine Right Wing Authoritarianism and Social Dominance Orientation instead of conservatism directly. This is methodologically sound because of other studies that have shown the connection between RWA, SDO, and political conservatism (Altemeyer, 1998; Pratto, 1999; Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius et al., 1996; Whitley & Lee, 2000).

Intolerance of Ambiguity

During the past 50 years, researchers have strived to understand not only the best way to measure ambiguity tolerance, but also the implications that being intolerant to ambiguity has for other aspects of one’s personality (Block & Block, 1950; Budner,
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1962; Eysenck, 1954; Feather, 1969, Kirton, 1978; Kohn, 1974, Sidanius, 1978, 1985). In relation to conservatism, intolerance to ambiguity has been theorized to relate to ethnocentrism (O’Conner, 1952) and authoritarianism (Kenny & Ginsberg, 1958; Pawlicki & Almquist, 1973). These results have been found in studies done outside of the U.S. as well. In a study conducted in Israel, Fibert and Ressler (1998) found that intolerance of ambiguity scores were significantly higher among moderate and extreme right-wing students than their moderate and extreme left-wing peers. According to Jost et al., “The weighted mean effect size (r), aggregated across 20 tests of the hypothesis conducted in 5 different countries involving over 2,000 participants was .38 (p<.0001)” (Jost et al., 2003).

Openness to Experience

Many different measures of openness to experience throughout the last two decades have found correlations to political conservatism. (Feather, 1979, 1984; Joe, Jones & Ryder, 1977; Jost & Thompson, 2000; Kish, 1973; Peterson & Lane, 2001; Pratto et al., 1994; Wilson, 1973) While some of these tests discovered correlations with indirect measures of conservatism (SDO, RWA, etc.), others directly used Wilson and Patterson’s (1968) C-scale and discovered the same relationships. Researchers have found relationships between conservatism and indirect measures of openness such as desire to participate in experiments that require openness and “having an exciting life” (Feather, 1979, 1984). Jost et al. found, “Correlational results from 21 tests conducted in the U.S. and Australia provide consistent evidence that people who hold politically conservative attitudes are generally less open to new and stimulating experiences (weighted mean $r = -.32$, p<.0001)” (Jost et al, 2003).
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Needs for Order and Structure

Correlations have been shown between needs for order and structure and both indirect (Altemeyer, 1998; Eisenberg-Berg & Mussen, 1980; Peterson et al., 1993) and direct (Webster & Stewart, 1973) measures of political conservatism. One study showed politically conservative adolescents were more likely to be neat, orderly, and organized (Eisenberg-Berg & Mussen, 1980), whereas another discovered a correlation of .24 between need for order and scores on the C-scale (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). These, as well as other studies, have demonstrated the link between personal needs for order and structure and the holding of politically conservative beliefs.

Need for Cognitive Closure

Researchers examining the relationship between need for cognitive closure and conservatism have reported positive correlations both in and outside of the U.S. Webster and Kruglanski (1994) found a correlation of .27 between the NFC (need for cognitive closure) scale and authoritarianism. Jost et al. (1999) reported a correlation of .21 between the NFC scale and self-reported conservatism. In Germany, Kemmelmeier (1997) found a consistent increase in NFC as one moves from the left to the right. This study provided evidence against the theory that NFC increases with proximity to both ideological poles (Shils, 1954; Sidanius, 1984, 1985). Chirumbolo (2002) reproduced these results in Italy. In Poland, Golec (2001) found strong correlations between NFC and self-reported social and economic conservatism. This research has demonstrated that there is indeed a relationship between need for cognitive closure and political conservatism, and that this relationship is not limited to the U.S.
Self-Esteem

Although there has been some evidence supporting the claim that people on the right have lower self-esteem, as well as react more to threats to that self esteem (Altemeyer, 1998; Boshier, 1969; Eisenberg-Berg & Mussen, 1980; Sales & Friend, 1973), these studies are not as conclusive as those that involve the other variables. There does seem to be a relationship between conservatism and self-esteem that deserves further exploration, but at this point the results are inconclusive. It is possible that the connection is not between low self-esteem and conservatism, but rather between an aggressive reaction to threats to self-esteem and conservatism (Jost et al., 2003).

Uncertainty Avoidance

The history of uncertainty avoidance in relation to conservatism is as vast as it is creative. Wison, Ausman and Mathews (1973) demonstrated that people who had high scores on the C-scale preferred simple paintings over more complex ones as well as a preference, albeit less in magnitude, for representational paintings over abstract art. Gilles and Campbell (1985) showed that conservatives are more likely to prefer simple poems over complex ones, and McAllister and Anderson (1991) demonstrated that conservatives prefer unambiguous literary texts when compared to ambiguous ones. In the same vein, Glasgow and Cartier (1985) found that conservatives prefer familiar rather than unfamiliar music. After evaluating the many different studies of uncertainty avoidance and conservatism, Jost et al. (2003) concluded that, “In diverse aesthetic and organizational contexts, then, evidence from three countries suggest that conservatives are generally motivated to eschew ambiguity, novelty, and uncertainty (weighted mean $r = -.27, p < .0001$)” (Jost et al., 2003).
Fear of Threat

Studies demonstrating the link between threat perception and conservatism in many different countries have shown a positive connection. Although some of these studies have demonstrated correlations with SDO and Right-Wing Authoritarianism rather than conservatism directly, both tendencies can clearly be understood as indicative of conservative, rather than, liberal ideology. Altemeyer (1998) discovered a correlation of .49 between perceptions of a “dangerous world” and authoritarianism, and Duckitt (2001) attained similar results with samples in New Zealand and South Africa as well as significant, albeit lower, correlations with SDO. In an imaginative study in an effort to understand if conservatives are more fearful in general, Buckley (2001) found that in the U.S., Republicans reported three times as many nightmares as Democrats. In another impressive and complicated study, Lavine, Polichak, and Lodge (1999) demonstrated that high authoritarians were more sensitive to threat-related words when compared to their liberal counterparts. While one might assume that this means that conservatives are therefore more neurotic than liberals, research has not supported this idea (Jost et al., 2003). Jost et al. (2003) concluded that:

Overall, our review of research conducted in five different countries involving 22 tests of the hypothesis suggests that fear and threat are indeed related to political conservatism (weighted mean $r = .18, p < .0001$). The correlation is substantially higher if one omits the studies in which neuroticism was used as the measure of fear and threat (weighted mean $r = .30, p < .0001$).

Fear of Death

Wilson (1973c) reported a correlation of .54 between fear of death and scores on the C-scale. Other researchers have demonstrated the relationship between fear of death
and variables associated with the political right, in comparison with the political left, such as defense of cultural norms (Greenberg et al., 1990; Greenberg, Porteus, Simon, & Pyszczynski, 1995), distance and derogation of out-group members (Harmon-Jones, Greenberg, Solomon, & Simon, 1996; McGregor et al., 2001), and increased stereotyping that is system-justifying (Schimel et al., 1999). Greenberg et al. (1992) found that after undergoing a mortality salience manipulation, conservatives had increased political intolerance, whereas liberals had increased political tolerance. The relatively consistent results of these varied studies show that there is a relationship between fear of death and conservative ideology that deserves further investigation.

*Threat to System Stability*

This variable is distinct from other forms of fear associated with conservatism because it specifically relates to threats to the stability of the social system. Reich (1946/1970, p.13) pointed out that the decline of the German economy from 1929 to 1932 accompanied an increase in votes for the Nazi party from 800,000 to 17 million. Many studies have demonstrated that during times of crisis people are attracted to the security of strong authoritarian leaders (Doty, Peterson, & Winter, 1991; McCann, 1997; Peterson et al., 1993, Rickert, 1998; Sales, 1972, 1973). The Jost group found that:

For 9 tests of the hypothesis, all conducted in the U.S. but across different historical time periods, we found reasonably strong support for the notion that threats to the stability of the social system increase politically conservative choices, decisions and judgments (weighted mean $r = .47$, $p < .0001$).
NYU ATTITUDES STUDY

It is the goal of this two-part study to directly test the motivated social cognition view of politically conservative ideology by demonstrating the correlations that may, or may not, exist between conservatism and the aforementioned personality variables. It is our hope that a well implemented empirical study directly examining each of these variables in relation to conservatism will bring us past the heated rhetoric that has surrounded a topic that has been both studied and debated for more than half a century (Adorno, 1950; Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Jost et al., 2003). This study is also valuable because by extending the hypothesis to occupational preference, we are testing the hypothesized relationship between personality and ideology in a way that has never before been examined.

In Study 1, we hypothesize that political conservatism will be positively linked to fear of death, a discomfort with system instability, intolerance of ambiguity, needs to achieve order, structure and closure, fear of threat, and negatively correlated to openness to experience, tolerance of uncertainty, and self-esteem.²

Study 2 is designed to extend this hypothesis to job task characteristics based on the idea that certain professions attract people that possess the personality characteristics that the professions demand (Rubinstein, 1997; Weller & Nadler, 1975). As DiRenzo (1967) noted:

…certain personality types tend to be attracted and/or recruited to particular occupations in a differential rather than in a random or unsystematic fashion, and seemingly so disproportionately as to constitute modal personality types for these occupations.

² Note that we are not testing for integrative complexity because administering integrative complexity assessments necessitates a one-on-one format that our design did not provide.
It is our hypothesis that political ideology will be linked to job choice, not because of the personal economic or political interests of someone in that profession, but rather because of the personalities that are attracted to those positions. In other words, professions that appeal to people who possess the personality variables that Jost et al. have linked to political conservatism will, in turn, be appealing to people that hold politically conservative beliefs.

**STUDY I: METHODOLOGY**

A questionnaire including a measure of political ideology was given to over 900 New York University college students that were enrolled in Introduction to Psychology. Of those 900, we contacted students that were strongly conservative (3 and above on a scale from -5 to 5, where 5 is extremely conservative, and -5 is extremely liberal), strongly liberal (-3 and below), or right in the middle (0). The eligible students were then asked to complete a questionnaire that was compiled to test for the aforementioned personality variables.

Of the 185 students that completed our questionnaire, 9 were cut because they either had not filled out the political ideology question on the Intro to Psych battery (certain students came to the experiment even though they did not meet our criteria for eligibility) or gave a contradictory answer when asked about political ideology at the end of our study. The average age of the other 176 participants was just under 19 years old (18.89yrs) and 72% of the sample was female. It is a fair assumption that although only 28% of the students were male, this disparity is not because of our methods, but rather a reflection of the Intro to Psych subject pool as a whole (70% female/30% male).
The students identified themselves as “White” (65.9%), “Asian American” (14.4%), “Black” (4.8%), “American Indian/Alaska Native” (.6%), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander” (.6%), and the rest identified as “other” (13.8%). 94% of the participants spoke English as their first language, and the other 6% have spent a majority of their lives in the U.S..

The students were asked to fill out a three part questionnaire by an interviewer that was unaware of the students’ political beliefs. The first 20 questions were the BIS/BAS scale used to discover whether the participant is motivated by a desire to increase gains or decrease loses (Carver & White, 1994), the next two were created to examine preferences for spicy foods and urban living (Amass & Jost, 2003), the next eight questions looked at students’ sleep habits including nightmares per week (Amass & Jost, 2003; Horne & Ostberg, 1976).

The second section included 50 questions related to the personality variables we are examining. Questions 1-7 measured need for cognitive closure (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), the next nine tested for tolerance of ambiguity (Budner, 1962; MacDonald, 1970), we then asked three questions about self-esteem (Robins, 2001; Rosenberg, 1965), and six questions representing the openness factor of the big five inventory, a psychological tool used to map personalities based on five major dimensions (Donahue, John & Kentle, 1991). Those were followed by five questions measuring fear of system instability/threat (Amass & Jost, 2003), and four questions from the prevention/promotion scale (Higgins, 1998). Next we asked seven questions from the Perceptions of a Dangerous World scale (Duckitt, 2001), then four questions about uncertainty avoidance (Jung, doctoral paper), and finally the section ended with five questions from the Fear of Death scale (Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1994).
We ended the questionnaire by giving the students a third packet that asked them to place themselves on a liberal-conservative scale. This was done to confirm their responses to the initial ideology question on the Intro to Psych battery. Instead of splitting the students based on any one definition of conservatism, we decided that directly asking them about their political beliefs would be more effective. Although the Jost group utilized a workable definition, for our purposes, a person is considered to be conservative if they consider themselves conservative. Also note that this question was administered after they had completed and turned in the questionnaire so that the students, unaware of why they had been selected to participate in this study, weren’t primed with thoughts about political ideology.

STUDY II: METHODOLOGY

Members of the 97th and 107th Congresses were selected by the jobs they held before entering Congress. 260 members of both the House and Senate were chosen because their previous employment fit into one of the following seven general categories: Education, Entertainment, Clergy, Sports, Law Enforcement, Medicine, and Engineering.

To measure a member of Congress’ political ideology, that member’s average annual rating by the Americans for Democratic Action (an interest group that rates members of Congress based upon their voting records on key issues in reference to the democratic platform) was subtracted from his or her average annual rating by the American Conservative Union (a conservative interest group). This gives each member a Liberal/Conservative (LC) score from -100 (the most liberal score possible) to 100 (the most conservative score possible).
After separating the members of Congress into professional groups and calculating their political ideology, we needed to see if there were in fact significant differences between the ideology (as demonstrated by voting records) of a Congressperson and the positions they held before entering Congress. We then had to assess which professions required the personality variables that we hypothesize are related to conservatism. To do this we had the student’s rate how necessary each of the variables would be for each of the professions.

After completing the packet described in Study I, but before they received the conservative/liberal question (again to avoid priming), the students were given a questionnaire pertaining to job tasks. The questions were similar to those in the first packet, but re-worded to be applied to job characteristics. The first packet read, “For each of the following statements, please circle a number to indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with that statement” and the statements were phrased to apply to them, i.e. “I think that having clear rules and order at work is essential for success.” The second packet read:

Certain jobs and occupations require a specific set of task-related characteristics that are different from those required by other occupations. We are interested in your perceptions. For each job listed in CAPITAL LETTERS below, please indicate how necessary or unnecessary each characteristic would be.

The statements were phrased accordingly, i.e. “A belief in the importance of having clear rules and order at work.”

Version A of the second packet asked the students to rank four of the professions and Version B asked them to rank four others (the original 7 from the Congressional research with the addition of Politics). At this point the students had already answered a number of questions and it seemed best to have them only rank four of the professions to
avoid inaccuracy due to respondent fatigue. The different versions of the packet were randomly assigned to the students.

At the end of the first packet, discussed in Study I, the students were asked, in reference to those 8 professions, “For each of the following occupations, please indicate how enjoyable a career in this field would be for you personally, if there were no differences in salary among these different occupations” (emphasis in original). If our hypothesis is supported, the students that have high scores on the personality variables we are examining, will show a preference for the professions that are viewed to necessitate those characteristics, and their political ideology will be in line with the other students that share the same preferences, as well as the members of Congress that have worked in those fields.

**STUDY I: RESULTS**

**Reliability of the scales**

The first step of our data analysis was to see if the items that were supposed to be testing for a common variable received similar responses. Although this process doesn’t tell us whether the questions tested what we intended them to, it will let us know if they were in fact testing for the same thing. Our findings are summarized in Table 1.0.
Table 1.0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
<th>Interpretation about reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIS Scale</td>
<td>.8055</td>
<td>Great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAS Scale</td>
<td>.8484</td>
<td>Great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for Closure</td>
<td>.5583/ .60*</td>
<td>Low/Fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance of Ambiguity</td>
<td>.7268</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Esteem</td>
<td>.8366</td>
<td>Great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to Experience</td>
<td>.6390</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to System Threat/Instability</td>
<td>.4846</td>
<td>Unacceptable**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to System Threat**</td>
<td>.6133</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System Instability**</td>
<td>.6662</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention Focus</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion Focus</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>Low, but acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of a Dangerous World</td>
<td>.7555</td>
<td>Great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty Tolerance</td>
<td>.6129</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Death</td>
<td>.8629</td>
<td>Great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic System Justification_</td>
<td>.7541</td>
<td>Great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition to Equality_</td>
<td>.8401</td>
<td>Great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair Market Ideology_</td>
<td>.7260</td>
<td>Great</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Alpha for NFC increases to .60 if we delete question 3, we will run analysis both with and without that question.

**Although we had originally been looking at sensitivity to system threat and sensitivity to system instability as one variable, after receiving such a low reliability score, and re-reading the questions, we analyzed them separately.

These scales were administered to the students during the Intro to Psych battery (Jost & Thompson, 2000; Kluegel & Smith, 1986).

This scale was also included on during the Intro to Psych Battery (Blount, Jost, Pfeffer, & Hunyady, 2003).

As you can see the measures were generally quite reliable. Some of them returned very impressive reliability results and for those below .60 we were able to reach an acceptable level for analysis. The only exception was the Prevention/Promotion scale.

We then took all of the reliable items and collapsed them into single measures for each variable (i.e. instead of there being six openness variables, there is now one that represents the mean score the respondent put for all the openness to experience questions). Next, we separated the participants into the three groups that we used to determine eligibility (conservatives ≥ 3, centrists = 0, liberals ≤ -3). There were 107 liberals, 43 centrists, and 26 conservatives. While the conservatives are clearly the
smallest group in our sample, this is to be expected in the liberal environment of NYU, and the possible effects of this disparity will be discussed later.

**Ideology and Psychology**

*Need For Closure*

As you can see in Table 1.1, we did not find a significant correlation between political conservatism and need for closure. Although these results do not support our hypothesis, and earlier findings, it is interesting to note the direction of the correlation, even though it is not strong enough to be considered significant. Graph 1.2 shows that the mean score of the NFC items for liberals is lower (meaning less need for closure), than both centrists and conservatives. Again, this only shows a direction, and we have no intention of claiming that one can conclude that there is a significant relationship based on our data.

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Multiple Comparisons Need For Closure</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(I) Ideology</td>
<td>(J) Ideology</td>
<td>Mean Difference (I-J)</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>-.2425</td>
<td>.18408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>-.2559</td>
<td>.22291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>.2425</td>
<td>.18408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>.0134</td>
<td>.25327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>.2559</td>
<td>.22291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>-.2955</td>
<td>.20653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>-.3101</td>
<td>.25010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>.0146</td>
<td>.28417</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graph 1.2

![Graph showing ideological perspective vs. mean 6 item Need for Closure Score.]

**Self Esteem**

Table 1.3 shows that we did not find any significant relationships between ideology and self esteem. As with NFC there is a direction of the relationship, albeit not a significant one, yet this time it is opposite from what our hypothesis would predict. Graph 1.4 shows that liberals have lower self esteem than conservatives, who in turn have lower self esteem than centrists.

**Table 1.3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I) Ideology</th>
<th>(J) Ideology</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>-.4843</td>
<td>.29681</td>
<td>.235</td>
<td>.1-1.1860</td>
<td>-.2174</td>
<td>.2174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>-.3713</td>
<td>.35942</td>
<td>.557</td>
<td>-1.2210</td>
<td>-.4784</td>
<td>.1-1.1860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>.4843</td>
<td>.29681</td>
<td>.235</td>
<td>-1.2174</td>
<td>-.4784</td>
<td>.1-1.1860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>.1130</td>
<td>.40837</td>
<td>.959</td>
<td>-.8524</td>
<td>-1.0784</td>
<td>.8524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>.3713</td>
<td>.35942</td>
<td>.557</td>
<td>-.4784</td>
<td>.1-1.2210</td>
<td>.2174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>-.1130</td>
<td>.40837</td>
<td>.959</td>
<td>-1.0784</td>
<td>.8524</td>
<td>.1-1.2210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graph 1.4

![Graph 1.4: Political Ideology vs Mean Self-Esteem Score](image)

**Tolerance of Ambiguity**

When analyzing these results we found our first significant relationship; liberals were significantly more tolerant of ambiguity than centrists. Table 1.5 shows that although both liberals and conservatives are more tolerant of ambiguity than centrists, the relationship is only significant when looking at liberals versus centrists. This could be interpreted to lend support to the extremist as ideologue theory, but by looking at Graph 1.6 you can see that liberals are actually more tolerant than conservatives, a finding that hypothesis does not predict. Being that this relationship between liberals and conservatives is not significant, our data can not truly lend support to that theory or our own hypothesis, although it is interesting to notice the interaction between this variable and political ideology.
Table 1.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I) Ideology</th>
<th>(J) Ideology</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>0.6030(*)</td>
<td>0.19925</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>-1.0740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>0.1017</td>
<td>0.24128</td>
<td>0.907</td>
<td>-0.4687</td>
</tr>
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<td>Liberal</td>
<td>-0.6030(*)</td>
<td>0.19925</td>
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<td>1.0740</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
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<td>0.27415</td>
<td>0.163</td>
<td>-1.1494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
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<td>0.24128</td>
<td>0.907</td>
<td>-0.6721</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Centrist</td>
<td>0.5013</td>
<td>0.27415</td>
<td>0.163</td>
<td>1.1494</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Graph 1.6

Openness to Experience

The relationship between openness to experience and political ideology is in the direction our hypothesis predicts, and although it is not considered statistically significant, it is quite close. Table 1.7 shows that liberals are more open than both centrist and conservatives. While we would expect to find that conservatives are less open to
experience than liberals, we were surprised by the similarity between centrists and conservatives on this measure. Graph 1.8 demonstrates that although the relationship can not be considered statistically significant, there does seem to be an interaction between ideology and openness to experience.

Table 1.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I) Ideology</th>
<th>(J) Ideology</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>.4079</td>
<td>.19121</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>-0.0442 .8599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>.4062</td>
<td>.23155</td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>-0.1412 .9536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>-.4079</td>
<td>.19121</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>-0.8599 .0442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>-.0016</td>
<td>.26309</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-0.6236 .6236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>-.4062</td>
<td>.23155</td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>-0.9536 .1412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>.0016</td>
<td>.26309</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-0.6203 .6236</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 1.8
Sensitivity to System Threat/ System Instability

As the reliability analysis showed, the five items that we created to test for this variable were not correlated highly enough to be considered reliable. We found that it was best to break this one category into two separate groups, not only because of post hoc considerations, but also because upon reviewing the questions we concluded they were examining two different issues. The five questions were:

• I have a preference for maintaining stability in society, even if there seems to be problems with the current system.

• I would be reluctant to make any large scale changes to the social order.

• Our way of life is seriously threatened by forces of terrorism in the world.

• Anyone who thinks that our economic system could not quickly collapse has forgotten the lessons of the Great Depression.

• People who think that the system is in a state of instability and crisis are exaggerating the severity of existing threats.

Although we theorized that the issues of stability and threat would be interconnected, the questions as we wrote them seem easily distinguishable as two (the first two listed) that look at a preference for stability in the system, and the last three that deal with perception of threat to both the economic and social system. While any theoretical changes made after the fact must be viewed with suspicion, in this case the adjustment seems both necessary and logically consistent.

When looking at the relationships between ideology and the two variables as separate groups (Stability and Threat) but not as individual questions, we found that conservatives had a significant preference for system stability when compared to liberals (p < .05), and that centrists also had a significant preference when compared to liberals.
PSYCHOLOGY OF IDEOLOGY

(p < .05). Although centrists had a weaker preference than conservatives, this relationship was not significant. Graph 1.9 shows that the direction is in line with our hypothesis.

Graph 1.9

![Graph showing the relationship between political ideology and mean system stability score](image)

Using the same method (analyzing the questions together by variable) to examine sensitivity to threat did not produce the same results. The results were not significant and although conservatives were slightly more sensitive to threat than liberals, both groups scored higher on the items than the centrists did. To discover if there was more information than our first round of analysis was demonstrating, we then analyzed each of the threat variables individually against political ideology.

Table 2.0 shows that we found a significant difference between liberals and conservatives on one of the threat questions (p < .05), but this should be interpreted carefully. It is more in line with our hypothesis to state that the reason the conservatives had a higher mean score on this threat item is because they are more sensitive to system threat, but that would be misleading the reader by ignoring the overlap between this
question and the political context of today. The question was regarding perception of terrorist threat. The administration in power, a conservative administration, has used terrorism as a foundation for many of it’s actions. This should not be interpreted to mean that the administration is or is not over stating the level of threat from terrorism, but simply that it is very possible that this question was tapping into a political variable, not a psychological one.

Table 2.0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Threat Items Question by Question</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>-1.364(*)</td>
<td>.46518</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>-2.464 - 2.643</td>
<td>-1.332</td>
<td>.4558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>1.3642(*)</td>
<td>.46518</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>2.643 - 2.4640</td>
<td>.4558</td>
<td>1.332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>1.3642(*)</td>
<td>.46518</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>2.643 - 2.4640</td>
<td>.4558</td>
<td>1.332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>-1.364(*)</td>
<td>.46518</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>-2.464 - 2.643</td>
<td>-1.332</td>
<td>.4558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>-1.364(*)</td>
<td>.46518</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>-2.464 - 2.643</td>
<td>-1.332</td>
<td>.4558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>-1.364(*)</td>
<td>.46518</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>-2.464 - 2.643</td>
<td>-1.332</td>
<td>.4558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>-1.364(*)</td>
<td>.46518</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>-2.464 - 2.643</td>
<td>-1.332</td>
<td>.4558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>-1.364(*)</td>
<td>.46518</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>-2.464 - 2.643</td>
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<td>.4558</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>-1.364(*)</td>
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<td>.011</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrist</td>
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<td>-1.364(*)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
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<td>-1.364(*)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>-1.364(*)</td>
<td>.46518</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>-2.464 - 2.643</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>-1.364(*)</td>
<td>.46518</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>-2.464 - 2.643</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>-1.364(*)</td>
<td>.46518</td>
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<td>.4558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>-1.364(*)</td>
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<td>.4558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrist</td>
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<td>-1.364(*)</td>
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<td>.4558</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>-1.364(*)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
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<td>-1.364(*)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrist</td>
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<td>-1.364(*)</td>
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<td>.011</td>
<td>-2.464 - 2.643</td>
<td>-1.332</td>
<td>.4558</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The other two threat items shown in Table 2.0 (economic system could collapse and system is in a state of instability and crisis) were not significantly correlated to political ideology, but Graph 2.1 does show a direction of the relationship.
The direction of both of these lines is opposite of what our hypothesis predicts, but this might be explained by an interaction with two other issues. The first is Economic System Justification (Jost & Thompson, 2000). The theory states that people will justify the economic system to satisfy personal needs. It is possible that the conservatives in our study do not perceive less threat, but in fact perceive *more* threat which leads them to system justification.

We are able to examine if this was the case by looking at the answers our participants gave on the Economic System Justification scale that was included in the Intro to Psych battery. The results are the most convincing we’ve recovered. The ESJ scale was quite reliable (alpha = .7541), and there were significant differences between all three groups (p < .05). Conservatives scored the highest, then centrists, and finally liberals. In fact, the graph of the mean scores on the ESJ scale is a mirror image of the one discussing economic threat. In other words, it seems likely that the effects of system justification are camouflaging any differences that we would see on our perceptions of economic threat scale. Within the theory of ESJ our results are actually saying the exact opposite of what they seem; those that report perceiving high threat are actually
perceiving the least amount, because as threat increases the likelihood that one replaces that threat with justification increases as well.

As for the perception of system crisis, it is possible that this too is a result of system justification (the theory states that there is economic system justification and social system justification.). Another plausible explanation is that this was actually testing a political variable, not a psychological one. Being that our President has been taking direct action to deal with what he states is an eminent threat to our country, people that agree with his actions (more likely to be ideologically conservative) might find security in these actions. It is also possible that liberals perceive the state of affairs as more dire, because they are more likely to disagree with our Presidents actions and view them as very problematic, therefore increasing the level of threat they perceive. In other words, it is difficult to tell if those in our study are different in their sensitivity to threat, or if it is actually that liberals believe our government’s recent actions are threatening our American system, whereas conservatives believe they are strengthening it.

Perceptions of a Dangerous World

Although our system stability variable returned inconclusive results concerning threat perception, we fortunately included a measure to test for this variable directly. Unfortunately, this measure did not reveal any significant relationships. As our hypothesis predicted, conservatives did perceive the world as more dangerous (not statistically significant), but Graph 2.2 reveals something we did not predict; centrists viewed the world as slightly more dangerous than the conservatives, although the difference is negligible.
Graph 2.2

Tolerance of Uncertainty

The results of the analysis on tolerance uncertainty returned insignificant results. As you can see in Table 2.3, there really are no conclusions that can be drawn from the data. Graph 2.4 shows that both liberals and conservatives are less tolerant of uncertainty than centrists, which would support the extremist as ideologue hypothesis, but the conservatives score slightly lower than the liberals, which could be used to support our hypothesis, except that because of the insignificance of the data, it can’t lend support to either.

Table 2.3
Another factor that should be considered when discussing the different perspectives on uncertainty tolerance and political ideology is the effect of politics today. Since our country is gearing up for what looks to be a very heated and important election, it makes since that people on both sides are becoming less tolerant of uncertainty, believing that their views are unquestionably correct. Within this view, centrists would be more tolerant because they are not bound by the ideologies of either pole.

*Fear of Death*

Our analysis did not find any relationships that came close to approaching statistical significance in relation to fear of death. Since the results are not significant it is dangerous to attempt to draw any conclusions from the data. That being said, Graph 2.5 shows that the direction of the data is in line with our hypothesis.
While our hypothesis explains this direction as a personality variable that would attract someone to the conservative party, there is another interpretation that should be considered. Given the events in national politics in the last few years, it would seem logical that someone in support of U.S. policy would be weary of death given that many of the policies are based upon a perceived threat. Because of this we find ourselves in a chicken and egg situation. Are conservatives more afraid of death because the policies of today necessitate this fear for our actions to be considered legitimate, or are those that have a predisposition to this fear attracted to conservatism because it helps alleviate a fear that exists with or without these political factors? Our hypothesis would be in line with the latter, but given the state of affairs today, it becomes a more complicated issue.
Other Notable Findings

There were two other significant relationships that are worth mentioning. First, liberals had significantly higher scores on the BIS scale (p < .05) when compared to centrists, yet no significant relationship existed between liberals and conservatives on this measure, although it was close to significant (p = .18). In other words, the liberals were more likely to attempt to avoid possible problems (i.e. are anxious), instead of attempting to find possible positive outcomes. Surprisingly, there was no difference between the groups when it came to the BAS scale (pleasure seeking), which is unexpected being that the scales theoretically measure opposite approaches.

We also found a significant relationship between political ideology and enjoyment of New York City (p < .05). Although there was not a significant difference between liberals and centrists, as Graph 2.6 demonstrates, conservatives were less pleased with New York than the other two groups (p < .05).

Graph 2.6
Although this isn’t directly related to our original hypothesis, it is intriguing. It would be interesting to see if there are connections between a person’s ideology, the prevailing ideology of their city, and their political views. It is possible that one of the reasons conservative NYU students dislike New York City is that, compared to their peers, they are in an ideological minority. It would be valuable to see if the same findings exist with liberal students in a conservative environment. If liberals respond the same way this would be viewed as an environmental factor, but if only conservatives respond this way to an opposing ideological environment it could indicative of a psychological factor.

Study I: Discussion

"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."
-Thomas Edison, discussing his many unsuccessful attempts to create the light bulb

While we did discover certain significant relationships between political ideology and the personality variables we were investigating, these results fail to confirm our hypothesis. With that in mind, one can’t help but wonder, why did this happen? Is a motivated social cognition view of political ideology an incorrect approach? Were there problems with our methods? Would the same inconclusive results be found if the study were to be replicated?

First and foremost, it is my view that the disappointing results can be credited more to methodological and situational problems than issues attributed to the theoretical foundation of the study. There were two main issues, one an error in design, the other a situational error. From the design side, we failed to include a measure of social desirability. This would control for students responding based on their perceptions of what they believed we wanted. In other words, giving answers that are not reflective of
their beliefs because they have a desire to “look good” on the survey. While we will never know what effect, if any, this had on our results, it is a problem that should be avoided in future research.

The next issue has to do with our sample. Clearly this research is plagued by the “sophomore syndrome”, a term used to criticize research that attempts to draw conclusions based only on college sophomores, a group that can hardly be considered representative of the U.S. population as a whole. While we had accepted this fact when designing the study, we ran into an even larger problem that we had not fully appreciated at the beginning of the project: NYU’s student population, especially those enrolled in intro to Psychology, are significantly more liberal than the rest of the country. It is quite difficult to draw valid conclusions when the population you are directly interested in is an overwhelming minority. Although every step was taken to increase conservative student’s attendance without subjecting them to any unnecessary influence, it appears that this disparity has had a large effect on our results.

The next issue that should be investigated further is the effect that having a certain party in power has on the population. It seems those that follow politics are either greatly in favor of President Bush’s policies, or seriously apposed to them. It would be logical to assume that this would change the way they view their own political beliefs, as well as the way they perceive the issues we are discussing. Anecdotal evidence points to both sides of the political spectrum hardening their stance as the election approaches. Personally, I have on many occasions listened to friends discuss national politics from both sides of the debate and have noticed both groups becoming less willing to accept the other’s points. In this way liberals could demonstrate many of the qualities that we hypothesized to be connected with conservatism because they feel so strongly that the
administration is making large errors. Conservatives, on the other hand, might be more open to debate because they do not feel threatened by many liberal ideals when there is a Republican President and a Republican Congress. This could also lead conservatives to be more self confident, whereas to a liberal who is frustrated by the actions our government is taking, confidence and efficacy could decrease with every presidential speech.

In the end there were problems that could have been avoided, those that were inevitable with the restricted subject pool we had access to, and those that deserve further investigation. Future research should attempt to empirically investigate these relationships with a more representative sample and need to include measures of social desirability. It would also be very interesting to research what party was in control during the many studies on the subject and see the interaction that has with the results.
STUDY II: RESULTS

The first step in the analysis of Study II was to see what differences existed within Congress based upon previous occupation and political ideology. Graph 2.7 shows the mean LC score of the Congress member’s that have worked in each of the professions.

Graph 2.7

![Bar Graph]

Although originally this seemed like a good way to compare the congressional information with the information we gathered from the students, notice that six of the eight jobs were considered more conservative, and that the two liberal jobs are not very liberal (-9 and -11, compared to 47 and 44 on the other end). To keep the analysis between the members of Congress and our participants more congruent, we split the members of Congress into three groups the same way we split the participants. Those members that had an LC score of -60 or below were placed in the liberal group, those with a score of 60 and above were placed in the conservative group, and those in between were placed in the centrist group. That left us with 84 liberals, 86 centrists, and 85 conservatives. We then graphed how many members of each group have held a position in the jobs we are discussing. Next, we did the same thing with the participants from our
study using their answers to the question about how enjoyable a career in each of the professions would be. Graphs 2.8-2.14 show the results for both our participants and the members of Congress.

Graph 2.8

Both the conservatives in our study and those in Congress seem more attracted to athletics than their liberal counterparts, but in our study the centrist were more attracted to this profession than either other group, a finding not replicated in Congress.

Graph 2.9

Again we find the conservatives in both groups being more attracted to law enforcement than the liberals, but here the centristers in Congress rank higher than either group, which is not the case in our study.
Data from both the U.S. Congress and NYU follow the same pattern; liberals find engineering the least attractive, centrists are in the middle, and conservatives find it the most attractive.

Again the relationship between the conservatives and the liberals in both groups are the same, yet the centrists in our study were almost as attracted to medicine as the conservatives and in Congress there were fewer centrists that had worked in the field than either other group.
When it comes to education the direction of the graphs are exactly opposite from each other. The only similarity between the two samples is that the centrist are located between the liberals and the conservatives.

For entertainment we see the same thing as with education, although this time the centrist in Congress are even with the liberals and in our sample the centrist are the ones that were the most attracted to a career in entertainment.
In both samples conservatives were more attracted to a religious profession, yet the centrists in Congress were the least likely to have worked in the field, whereas in our sample centrists were more attracted to the profession than liberals.

While these graphs seem to be showing an interaction between ideology and job choice, at least in some of the professions, they don’t tell us anything about why there is this interaction, much less if it has anything to do with the characteristics of those professions. To understand this question we turned to the responses the students gave concerning the qualities each job demands.

*Job Task Characteristics*

The first step in analyzing the student’s responses to the job task characteristics section was doing reliability testing on the items we used. In some cases there was only one question that directly asked about the variable (i.e. necessitating “High self esteem and self-confidence”). Being that they are so direct, we are confident in these questions. The reliability analysis of the multi-question variables is summarized in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Need for Closure</th>
<th>Openness to Experience</th>
<th>System Stability</th>
<th>Prevention Focus</th>
<th>Perception of a Dangerous World</th>
<th>Fear of Death</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>.1130</td>
<td>.7435</td>
<td>.4157</td>
<td>.3585</td>
<td>.5717</td>
<td>.4746</td>
<td>.5106 without #3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
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<td>.5036</td>
<td>.6933</td>
<td>.6803</td>
<td>.7152</td>
<td>.4704 without #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
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<td>.7699</td>
<td>.5735</td>
<td>.5370</td>
<td>-.2293</td>
<td>.6526</td>
<td>.4786 without #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.9233</td>
<td>.6487</td>
<td>.4389</td>
<td>.5876</td>
<td>.5416</td>
<td>.6347 without #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.8197</td>
<td>.5812</td>
<td>.4847</td>
<td>.0098</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.7312</td>
<td>-.5528</td>
<td>.6714</td>
<td>.7143 without #3</td>
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<td>Law Enforcement</td>
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<td>.8943</td>
<td>.5328</td>
<td>.5189</td>
<td>-1.6232</td>
<td>-.0314</td>
<td>.5593 without #3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers that are **bold and underlined** indicated that the measure has reached an acceptable level of reliability, those that are *italicized* are unacceptably low by any standards, and those that are neither are too low, but possibly usable.

Clearly the reliability analysis did not return overwhelmingly positive responses. There are a couple factors that could explain this problem. First off, it is difficult to get valid reliability analysis with groups of variables that are made up of so few questions. Second, and more importantly, this data lead us to believe that we might have suffered from a problem that many have critiqued the Authoritarian Personality piece discussed earlier for having. The problem is that of response acquiescence. This is a phenomenon where a participant answers novel questions in the affirmative, not because that is what they truly believe, but because they are going along with the question and in turn, the examiner. To avoid this, scales are created with items that are reverse coded, i.e. a low response on one item within the need for closure questions is coded in the same way as a high response on another.
We did include reverse coded items; the problem is that the variables which had reverse coded questions are the ones that had the disturbingly low reliability results. Note that the reliability greatly increases if we cut NFC item number three (“Succeeding in a work environment that lacks clearly stated objectives and requirements”), which was the question in the Need For Closure scale that was reverse coded. This also seems to be the case with the questions from the Perceptions of a Dangerous World. Although there were not enough questions to do a reliability analysis without the reverse coded question, the incredibly low reliability scores on this variable point to the same conclusion. While these findings are concerning, it is still valuable to move ahead with the analysis in an attempt to discover relationships between personality, ideology, and job preference.

We are able to discover what characteristics the sample believes are necessary for each job by looking at the mean score each participant put for the different variables in reference to the different professions. Table 3.2 reports which characteristics the students considered necessary for each of the professions.

Table 3.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Highest Mean rating</th>
<th>Lowest Mean rating</th>
</tr>
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We then did analysis to see if there were any significant differences in the way the students ranked the attractiveness of each profession based upon their ideology, so that we could see if this difference correlates with the ratings of the characteristics. We found that liberals were less attracted to law enforcement than both centrists and conservatives \((p < .05)\), and that conservatives were more attracted to the profession than centrists, but that relationship did not reach statistical significance. When looking at Table 3.2, with this in mind, the information seems to support our hypothesis. Law Enforcement is seen as necessitating: a preference for system stability, a view of the world as dangerous, a prevention focus, need for closure, low self esteem and low openness to experience. All of these factors support our hypothesis, although we should note that Law Enforcement also ranked relatively high on uncertainty tolerance and tolerance of ambiguity, which is not what our theory would predict.

Next we found that conservatives preferred Engineering to a significant degree when compared to liberals \((p < .05)\). In comparing this information with Table 3.2 the results are inconclusive. For tolerance of uncertainty, self-esteem, and need for closure, the relationship is what our hypothesis predicted, but this is not the case for all of the variables. Engineering was also ranked high for openness to experience, tolerance of ambiguity, and low on fear of death, perceptions of a dangerous world, and prevention focus. While some of this information supports our hypothesis, these other connections seem to refute it. Because of this, it seems difficult to draw any conclusion between job task characteristics and political ideology based on Engineering.

Finally, conservatives were attracted to a profession in Religion significantly more than liberals and centrists \((p < .05)\). This is a very important finding because Religion almost perfectly fits our hypothesized definition of a conservative occupation. It
is ranked first in preference for stability, first in perceptions of a dangerous world, third from last on tolerance of ambiguity, second to last on tolerance of uncertainty, second from last for self-esteem, and third from last for openness to experience. The only category that is not in-line with our hypothesis is need for closure where it is ranked second from last. For both prevention focus and fear of death it is in the middle of the pack, which neither supports nor refutes our hypothesis.

As a final analysis we attempted to find significant differences in previous employment of the Congress members based on their ideology and examine those differences in light of the student job rankings. Unfortunately we did not find any statistically significant differences within Congress, but there was a relationship that is close to statistical significance and therefore warrants attention.

The members of Congress that had previously worked in the field of engineering were more likely to be conservative when compared to those that had worked in education, who were more likely to be liberal (not statistically significant, p = .068). This is interesting because in our student sample the conservatives were also more likely to favor a career in engineering. Even though the task characteristic analysis of this profession was inconclusive, it is exciting that the relationship existed in two very different samples, one comprised of professional politicians and one of college students.
CONCLUSION

After almost a year’s worth of work it’s time to write the five word conclusion that every researcher fears: It was a good effort. Unfortunately because of the previously mentioned problems this is one of the few valid conclusions that can be drawn from the work. That being said, at points the data does seem to hint at an interaction between personality and political ideology, but drawing any firm conclusions from those hints would be dangerous.

Although the motivated social cognition view of political ideology was not confirmed in this study, it was certainly not denied. The majority of the data was in the expected direction, and in the few places were it diverged from our expectations there seemed to be other factors that our study had not eliminated.

If anything this study should be viewed as an example to base further research upon. Hopefully we have demonstrated a strong theoretical foundation and shown some of the pitfalls that should be avoided when studying political ideology. The interaction that appears to exist between the respondents answers and the political climate of today shows us how important context will be to the future of the field. Examining the interaction between the governing administrations ideology and the personalities of those that both agree and disagree will hopefully help clarify many of the issues that have been discussed here and for the last 50 years.
References:


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