

The Role of Policy Preferences in Mass Belief Systems

How much do they matter, and what matters when they don't?

George Elliott Morris

The University of Texas at Austin

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Government Honors

Dr. Bethany Albertson

May 4, 2018

© 2018 George Elliott Morris

All Rights Reserved

Acknowledgements

This thesis was prepared using grant funding from the Audre and Bernard Rapoport and Robert D. King Thesis Scholarship, as well as the University of Texas at Austin's Undergraduate Research Fellowship. I thank both for their generous contributions which have made this research possible.

I would not have started — much less completed — this honors thesis without endless encouragement and guidance from Dr. Bethany Albertson. Bethany has been one of the great scholarly inspirations in my life, and without her supervision of this process, it is safe to say that I would likely not be on the path that I am today. Her drive for and ability to conduct research that produces meaningful understandings of our political reality is a skill I hope to, with much luck and hard work, approximate over the course of my career.

I thank Dr. John McIver for instructing the honors thesis program for the Department of Government at the University of Texas at Austin. Through many hours of review and revision, Dr. McIver has helped me produce a body of work that is more conceptually sound than I would have been able to produce on my own.

Several other scholars provided guidance over the course of this project. I surely would not have completed this task without a group of phenomenal scholars supporting me at this and other stages of my undergraduate education. Though they have provided comments, often extensive, any and all errors in this work remain my own.

The Role of Policy Preferences in Mass Belief Systems

How much do they matter, and what matters when they don't?

Abstract

What is ideological self-identification? Classic theories of political ideology may not produce an adequate answer for this modern construct that, while akin the familiar concept of "belief systems," is certainly not identical. This thesis fills a gap between our classic understanding of Americans' policy-based, "operationalized" ideology (Converse, 1964; Ellis and Stimson, 2012) and "symbolic" ideology driven by feelings toward and identification with social groups (Sniderman et. al., 1993; Ellis and Stimson, 2012; Mason, 2018). By using both policy preferences and social attitudes to predict self-identified ideology among respondents to the 1992-2012 American National Election Study surveys, I suggest that ideological identification is both issue and identity-based, with the latter holding more — but not all — of the weight in the system. Using a survey experiment of my own design I find that ideological identification has a small, but significant, impact on our policy preferences. These findings suggest a reevaluation of the role that policy preferences and social attitudes play in determine where voters place themselves along (or among) the political spectrum(s).

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	What is Ideology?	5
2.1	Ideology	6
2.2	Ideology and innocence	7
2.3	Ideology and polarization	8
2.4	Ideology and dimensions	10
2.5	Ideology and identification	11
2.6	Ideology and the present inquiry	14
3	The Question Revisited	16
3.1	Hypotheses	17
3.2	Approach	18
4	Evidence from An Existing Survey	20
4.1	What is ideological identification?	21
4.2	Explaining ideological identification	22
4.3	Three different models of ideological identification	27
4.4	Ideological identification and political knowledge	33
4.5	Conclusion	37

5 Evidence from a Survey Experiment	39
5.1 Motivation	40
5.2 Data and Design	40
5.3 Results	41
5.4 Negative Affect in Ideological Identity	45
5.5 Conclusion	47
6 Discussion	49
6.1 Self-identified ideology is a product of multiple inputs	49
6.2 Identification with a political party might be less important than we think	51
6.3 Ideology, policy preferences, and social affect have grown closer over time	53
6.4 A mild causal role of ideological identity	54
6.5 Discussion	55
A Survey Questionnaire	57
B Correlations Between Questions	63

Chapter 1

Introduction

The study of political belief systems — or “ideology” — has demanded an enormous amount of attention from scholars of public opinion. A large body of research has focused on the role that public policy preferences play in shaping our systems of political beliefs and forming our ideological identification (Converse, 1964; Zaller, 1992; Kinder and Kalmoe, 2017). Other research has concerned itself with the role of feelings toward and identification with political groups in shaping those systems (Sniderman et al., 1991; Conover and Feldman, 1981; Mason, 2018; Achen and Bartels, 2016).

Over the years, the wealth of research into policy preferences has set in stone a few key findings about the way our belief systems operate. Primarily, Philip Converse argued, our issue attitudes are ill-organized and not often “constrained” by each other (1964). That is, many Americans often hold both stereotypical liberal and stereotypical conservative issue attitudes. One might support legal bans on abortion while also proposing strict regulations on business in an effort to elevate environmental protections. The people are also inconsistent in these issue attitudes and can change responses to survey questions even over short periods of time. Still, some are deeply-held; “ideologue” Americans, to use Converse’s term, will have an “operational” ideology (Ellis and Stimson, 2012) wherein most preferences

match those assumed held by one pole of the ideological spectrum. This is as true today as it was in 1964 (Kinder and Kalmoe, 2017).

But what about Americans that don't have policy preferences — or, at least, constrained/consistent ones? Are they left to drift along outside the ideological spectrum, void of identification with either side of the liberal-conservative space? In modern-day America, scholars cannot believe that a voter without issue attitudes has no ideological attitudes whatsoever. Indeed, other research takes up this cause and explains ideology through the social lens of ideological identity. It is our membership and identity with groups both political and apolitical that determine our ideology and issue attitudes, they argue.

Research finds that voters use their attachments to political groups to aid them in making decisions. This is true famously for choosing our preferred candidates for political office (Popkin, 1994), but also for forming our beliefs about public policy (Sniderman et al., 1991; Cohen, 2003). These social attitudes make up a “symbolic” ideology (Ellis and Stimson, 2012) that Americans substitute for policy preferences in the processes by which they form their ideological identification. In other words, instead of being “issue-based” ideologues who use policy preferences to decide their ideological identity, they are “identity-based” (Mason, 2018). Apolitical groups may strengthen these attachments, too, making our “identity-based” ideologies not entirely political (Mason and Wronski, 2018).

To be sure, a symbolic ideology does not arise absent preferences — with the idea being that the public will hold issue attitudes that align with those of the groups to which they belong. These preferences aren't fake, so to speak, but they don't arise out of a rational evaluation of the policy, a weighing of the evidence for and against, etc. (Sniderman et al., 1991). They are born out of social identity.

These two approaches offer much insight into the ideological mind of the average American. Yet, there are still questions to be asked and answers to be had. What if voters are not entirely driven by issues, as the former theory might suggest, or by identity, as the latter could? What if the public is somewhere

in the middle — forming their ideological identities based both off of their policy preferences and social affect? Political scientists so far have seemed to suggest (though in scattered work) that this might be the case. If so, the real unanswered question is by how much does each process matter?

This thesis addresses this hole in the literature and posits that the real answer lies somewhere in the middle. I seek to answer the following: When ideological identification is explained by preferences for certain public policies, which policies matter more? Furthermore, when policy preferences don't help explain identification, what matters instead?

I propose to answer my question with two studies: (1) an analysis of existing survey data, and (2) an original survey experiment. I begin by using a suite of ordinary least squares regression equations to analyze the relationship between issue preferences, group identification, and self-reported ideological identification among respondents to the 1992-2012 American National Election Studies' cumulative time-series data. This will answer both my primary question of whether certain policies “matter more” to determining one's self-identification and whether we are both issue and identity-based ideologues. I also use a survey experiment with randomized manipulation to supplement the scholarly understanding of the causal relationship between policy preferences and ideological identity.

Before gathering my own answers, however, I turn first to those answers that others have put forth. This thesis proceeds as follows: In chapter 2, I review the concept of and scholarly work on belief systems. This begins with a broad historical introduction to the conceptualization of political ideology, which pivots in the mid twentieth century to canvass the explosive growth in literature about belief systems. Here, our modern understanding of the marriage between policy preferences and political affiliations are formed.

In chapter 3, I hypothesize that American belief systems are embodiment of policy preferences, group identification, and individual affect. In chapters 4 and 5 I test my hypotheses with a variety of models and approaches in analyzing data from the American National Election Study surveys and a novel

survey experiment.

Chapter 2

What is Ideology?

Ideology, in a word, is belief. In their purest forms, voters' ideologies are their attitudes about a way the government should run. Over time our understanding of these systems of beliefs have evolved to incorporate findings from new and groundbreaking work in political psychology. How much does the average American pay attention to politics? Are they able to hold consistent attitudes about a wide range of issues? If not, what tools are they use to make political decisions? And have those tools changed over time?

Suffice to say that research has answered many of these questions — some quite thoroughly — over the last century. This chapter guides the reader through the most important contributions to our understanding of American political ideology and frames this thesis within the discussion of past work.

But first, where to begin, but with the beginning of ideology itself?

2.1 Ideology

Strictly speaking, political beliefs — or ideas about how government is or should operate — have been around as long as government itself. We don't have records for when man initiated a communal society, as in that first great agricultural revolution of the ten thousandth B.C.E., but humanity does have a single ancient work in which to initialize the discussion.

As far back as in Aristotle's *Politics* we receive hints about the organization of like-minded individuals with corresponding beliefs about the achievement of some goal (Aristotle, 1908). Writing about a *koinonia*, Aristotle imagines a sovereign political association of man organizing to construct the best form of government for their *polis* (city). Aristotle's citizens are responsible for selecting a Democracy, Kingship, or Oligarchy — and with that decision the people must take into account their various beliefs about the best system in which they could live (or perhaps more Aristotelian, exist). Of course, an entire field of study has been born out of this struggle between the “proper” form of Government. It is the underpinning of this philosophy on governance — from Aristotle, to Montesquieu, to Rousseau and Jefferson — that the citizens within that government may have preferences about the way it is run.

Our next stop on the timeline is over two millennia after the first. French aristocrat Destutt de Tracy (Destutt de Tracy, 1803) said that ideology is a cluster of beliefs drawn from some competing sources. Others have explained that de Tracy imagined ideology to be “Social romances’ — collections of ‘political proposals, perhaps somewhat intellectual and impractical but at any rate idealistic’” (Kinder and Kalmoe, 2017; Lakoff, 2011; Geertz, 1973). Ideology had transformed from a “simple” choice about the proper form of government to a grouping of preferences, drawn from competing philosophies and influenced by competing actors and social groupings. Our understanding of the concept can expand beyond a rudimentary model of preferences to one of inputs — policy preferences and group attitudes — and outputs — ideology.

2.2 Ideology and innocence

We can move the position on the timeline again 160 years in the future. In 1960, a group of political scientists at the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center enhanced our understanding of belief systems — indeed, the entire American political process — in extraordinary ways. Angus Campbell, Philip Converse, Warren Miller, and Donald Stokes published *The American Voter* (Campbell and Center, 1960), in which they wrote that ideology is a “particularly elaborate, close-woven, and far ranging structure of attitudes. By origin and usage its connotations are primarily political, although the scope of the structure is such that we expect an ideology to encompass content outside the political order...”

Campbell et. al. identified to important characteristics of ideology. First, they posited the existence a “taxonomic system” in which voters categorized particular beliefs on certain subjects into “basic ordering dimensions” (Campbell and Center, 1960). Second, these dimensions, or “attitude structures,” could be laid within a liberal-conservative continuum that evolves in meaning over time.

The realization of a dynamic, dimensional nature of ideology places it within grasp of our modern view of the subject. However, it's one phrase in their initial definition of the subject that yield Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes — and really, I assume mainly Converse — so important in the development of our current structure of belief systems research: “close-woven.”

That a particular ideology ought to be “close-woven,” comprising beliefs about different public policies (perhaps across dimensions!) that are consistent with the one that came before, is not a hard proposition to grab. This is Converse's idea of ideological “constraint” (Converse, 1964). However, a grouping of individuals that places them within either one or two ideological buckets, but offering no place in between, does not exist. As Converse found, the average American citizen could not remotely classify their belief system as “close-woven.” Rather, the public held preferences that were wildly contrary to each other, often holding liberal positions on one issue and conservative on another. We can imagine

an individual from Converse's era who was opposed to school desegregation though felt that welfare spending (particularly for black Americans) should be increased.

If we wanted to place that or the average voter into a bucket, we would have to break down the sides of our two pails and create one ill-defined grouping. The level of constraint Americans show in their attitudes has not massively improved over time. As Donald Kinder and Nathan Kalmoe write:

“The American public's views on policy would eventually come to approximate the degree of ideological structure shown by partisan elites today. Eventually, but not anytime soon. All else equal, this achievement, if that is the right way to put it, would take place on or about 2315” (Kinder and Kalmoe, 2017, p. 29).

Converse found still more bad news. According to him, just 2.5% of the public invoked ideological concepts when justifying their political beliefs. Slightly more (9%) understood ideological concepts but did not name them outright. This, too, has hardly increased over time (Kinder and Kalmoe, 2017).

Recent years have seen a vast increase of research into American political ideology. Indeed, the remainder of this chapter will cover just a few decades but nearly double our bibliography. We start by revisiting Converse's crucial claim — that Americans are “innocent of ideology” — as well as every chapter in the original *The American Voter*.

2.3 Ideology and polarization

Michael Lewis-Beck, William Jacoby, Helmut Norpoth, and Herbert Weisberg wrote a contemporary rethinking of nearly all we know about American political behavior, and it informs the next important step in understanding how public policy informs our belief systems (Lewis-Beck et al., 2008). Their book was titled “*The American Voter Revisited*.”

Where Converse found very low levels of Constraint, Lewis-Beck et. al. find that constrained belief systems are slightly more common among the American public today, though still rather rare. More importantly they find a deepening divide between the average liberalness (as determined by certain policy preferences) of self-described liberals and self-described conservatives. This is an important contribution; though no significant aggregate increase in constraint has washed over the American public, our two major ideological buckets have come to have more attitudinal meaning attached to them over time.

Matt Grossman and Dave Hopkins find a similar divide in their book *Asymmetric Politics: Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats* (2016) which brings the added advantage of investigating ideology within the context of our modern polarized political parties. They argue that Republicans are, on average, much more conservative than Democrats are liberal and that this trend has increased over time. The authors find that that this is true both for their self-identification, but also for their policy preferences (though to a lesser extent). It is here where we must stop to ask a question.

If liberals and conservatives are drifting apart from each other (Pew Research Center, 2017), and the separation is greater when measured by self-described liberalness than the constraint of their preferences (Grossmann and Hopkins, 2016), what explains the rest of their ideological identification? What is doing the polarizing? Clearly, the American people are thinking about more than just policy preferences when they, to use Converse's words, "come to politics with ideology in mind" (Converse, 1964).

One novel discovery in recent years is the rise of "negative partisanship," which explains the phenomena of many Americans not identifying themselves as part of a political party but still possessing vastly more negative feelings for one party over the other (Webster and Abramowitz, 2017). Abramowitz and Webster argue that this polarization of identity can run parallel or even tangential to polarization of policy preferences. Not only are Americans becoming more extreme in their ideas of how the government ought to run, but a chasm is deepening and broadening between their attitudes toward the outgroup. Abramowitz and Webster echo a passage from Lilliana Mason's article "The rise of uncivil agreement:

Issues vs behavioral polarization in the American electorate” in which she writes “the American public can hold remarkably moderate and constant issue positions, while nonetheless becoming progressively more biased, active, and angry when it comes to politics” (2013).

Abramowitz and Webster find that this increase in affective polarization of the American electorate is driven largely by feelings of anger and fear, especially among the ideological right.

2.4 Ideology and dimensions

Christopher Ellis and James A. Stimson set out to explore the role that attitudes play in our belief systems long ago, but most notably in a 2012 book titled “Ideology in America.” The authors posit that our ideological identification is split up into two parts, which they call “faces”. First, there is our “operational” face, in which our preferences for public policy make up our ideology. This has been the subject of this paper thus far. Second is the “symbolic” face of ideology, by which the authors mean the inputs we factor into our ideological self-identification that are not based on public policy.

Ellis and Stimson further break down our “operational” ideology into two major dimensions: the economic dimension, which explains most differences between liberals and conservatives, and the cultural dimension, which incorporates different preferences about immigration, capital punishment, homosexuality, etc. Ellis and Stimson, as well as Hans Noel (2013) and Donald Kinder and Nathan Kalmoe (2017), agree about the power of the first dimension, siding with decades of research that place economic issues above social issues in the hierarchy of our belief systems.

However, there is another type of issue dichotomy that I have yet to address: “easy” vs “hard” issues. Edward Carmines and James Stimson made this distinction in 1980 to capitalize on the difference between heavily technical policy and policy symbolic, cultural, or otherwise incomplex policy positions. They write that “easy” issues have three qualities: “1. The easy issue would be symbolic rather than

technical. 2. It would more likely deal with policy ends than means. 3. It would be an issue long on the political agenda.” (Carmines and Stimson, 1980, pg. 80).

Easy issues are easy because they have social and moral meaning attached to them and have been on the political stage long enough for voters to place themselves into camps supporting or opposing that issue. Abortion, for example, is an easy issue because it meets all 3 criteria. Abortion policy (1) has symbolic value via normative appeal (most people don’t set out to harm pregnant women and their would be children, for example); it (2) is concerned mostly with the ends of the policy (access to abortion) rather than the means; and it (3) has been on the national agenda since at least the Supreme Court’s decision in *Roe v Wade* in 1973.

This is the operational dimension of ideology. But what is the symbolic dimension of ideology? The part of us that is neither policy-based economic or social attitudes? The most obvious answer is that people are communicating their identification with a given group or individual (a process which, yes, could also rear its heads in the “easy” policy issues). In other words, the symbolic dimension is made up of social attitudes. I think it better to assign the symbolic dimension meaning abstract any policy concerns. In this thesis’ understanding of the term, symbolic ideology is identity-based ideology.

So, what is ideological identification?

2.5 Ideology and identification

Achen and Bartels (2016) mirror the assessments made by Kinder and Kalmoe and Noel, saying that “Belief systems of ordinary citizens are generally thin, disorganized, and ideologically incoherent. [...] Ideological thinking often turns out to be just a rather mechanical reflection of what their favorite group and party leaders have instructed them to think.” In this frame ideology is a top-down process, whereby the public constructs their belief system to reflect that of their preferred groups and individuals

— rather than a bottom-up process whereby they construct their identification based off an aggregation of specific political beliefs and personal drives (Jost et al., 2009). If this is true, we are left with the question, how much do groups really matter?

Achen and Bartels are not the only political scientists to address the role of groups in and on our political belief systems. Paul M. Sniderman, Richard A. Brody, and Philip E. Tetlock present a model of ideology in their 1991 text *Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology* that does just this. Sniderman et. al. argued that because voters often vary in the issues to which they pay attention, organize their belief structure in different ways, and rely on cognitive shortcuts (“heuristics”), ideological identification may serve the opposite role that I, along with the literature, have presented thus far. Specifically, they hypothesize, policy preferences likely result from a combination of our ideological identification, political party, principles, and feelings towards specific groups. They write:

“Citizens may be unlikely to master political concepts like liberalism and conservatism through abstract thinking. But they can put them to use if they know whom they like – and dislike – politically. It is a mistake [...] to suppose that because people cannot define a concept they cannot make use of it” (Sniderman et al., 1991, p. 161).

Sniderman et. al. argue that the “minimalist” view of ideology espoused by Converse and others relies too much on an academic, intellectual interpretation of ideology — one dictated by constraint among political preference — and not enough on the ideas in our belief systems. Although I will address this conflict in full in the fourth chapter of this text, for now I offer two comments:

First, the group-based ideological model *is* able to be incorporated into Converse’s theory of belief systems. The third level of ideology he presented is a group-based called “group interest,” a category in which 45% of voters are placed after citing social and political groups in their definitions of the two ideological labels (Converse, 1964, p. 17). Second, allow me to present a methodological and theoretical departure from Sniderman’s critique.

Whether or not ideological labels are an intervening variable in our model of policy preferences and identification — identification could be the product of social attitudes and valenced evaluations of the two polar categories — our investigation still wants to know how much variance in the former can be explained by the latter. That is to say that even if our formal models imply causation moving from issue attitudes to ideology, we might still wonder if ideology affects attitudes. This is the subject of both chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis.

However, something should be made clear before moving on: This text so far has been mixing discussion of ideological identity with the discussion of belief systems, which are worth differentiating to incorporate discussion of social affect. Although our belief systems are typically defined as networks of preferences for different public policies, which could be influenced by social identity, they do not directly take group affect into account.

Identification with an ideological label, on the other hand, necessarily does; and since political polling and surveys often ask a question The two concepts are so different, in fact, that the Pew Research Center reports on a combination of questions about voters' issue attitude called "ideocentrality" [pew2017] rather than frequently using self-identified ideology.

Pamela Conover and Stanley Feldman were some of the first scholars to address this issue. In developing a formal model for the process by which we evaluate ideological groups and develop identification with them, the authors offered some of the first major development of the conceptualization of ideological identity (Conover and Feldman, 1981). They posit that we use our social attachments and attitudes toward preferences — which play a weaker role than the former — to evaluate the value of both labels (liberal or conservative) and place align ourselves with either pole.

Ideological identification is thus mostly different from the classic "belief system" ideology in that it incorporates the very significant role of social attachment in the public's mind.

In her 2018 paper "Ideologues Without Issues: The Polarizing Consequences of Ideological Identities,"

Lilliana Mason furthers the case that ideological identification is fundamentally different from ideology derived from policy preferences (Mason (2018)). She even goes further than simply extending the literature, suggesting that we're living in a hyper-polarized era where identity politics have attached so much affective meaning to the labels that our ideological identification is a product overwhelmingly of social attitudes.

2.6 Ideology and the present inquiry

Until recent literature, the debate about ideology has but touched around the edges of the influence of public policy preferences on our self-identification, and vice versa. But we aren't offered much an answer to the question of which policy preferences matter more, aside from several abstract constructions of "dimensions" of ideology and a paper now three decades old (Conover and Feldman, 1981). Although these works do sufficiently answer the questions they address, ours is unanswered.

When ideology is based on policy preferences, which policy preferences matter more? When it is not, what matters instead?

In *What's the Matter with 'What's the Matter with Kansas?'* Larry M. Bartels (Bartels, 2006) suggests an answer to the question, asserting that social issues have an increasing influence over our ideological self-identification, but economic policy still matters more. An analysis by Delia Baldassarri and Andrew Gelman (Baldassarri and Gelman, 2008) found the same, but with a great deal of influence given to positions on "moral" (or "social") policies. But this research uses data nearly 15 years old now, missing a lot of the rise of polarization, social media, attention to news, and growing correlation between ideological and partisan identity. These factors could very well have changed the answer to our question. These two papers also address issue-based ideology within the dimensionality paradigm, and largely giving equal weight to preferences. This thesis asks which individual policies hold the most sway over ideological identification, and what role this plays when combined with social identity.

This approach to analyzing American belief systems suggest I use a different formula than that Sniderman et. al. (1991) or Achen and Bartels (2016), uses. Whereas the authors seek to disentangle the impact of ideology in forming our preferences, this thesis addresses the opposite. Rather than theorizing that identification precedes development of preferences, I posit that we must do the opposite; If we desire to discern on which policies voters put the most weight within the aggregation process that forms their ideological identification, than those policies must necessarily be interpreted as independent factors in belief systems. However, as mentioned above, necessity should not always dictate our methods, and so I will employ analyses both of existing survey data and a novel experiment data to bring multiple data points to this discussion.

In the end, what are we left with? Although answers are suggested across, between, and within the belief systems literature, my question remains unanswered. When self-defined political ideology is explained by public policy preferences, which policies matter more? When policy preferences don't matter, what matters instead? Anchored with an understanding of the small role that public policies play in our belief systems. as well as armed with a theory that group influence may be surmounting what little role many preferences do play, this inquiry now begin.

Chapter 3

The Question Revisited

The literature on belief systems and ideological identification provides a solid hypothesis on which to launch my investigation: in sum, the remainder of this paper will argue that our group attitudes are much more important than our policy preferences for determining our ideological identification, but that the latter will still matter after controlling for the former. Allow again a brief summation of what scholarship says within this context:

Students of political science know, famously, that our belief systems are ill constrained and organized crudely (Converse, 1964; Kinder and Kalmoe, 2018; Campbell et. al., 1970). Positions on abortion policy might not correspond to ideologically consistent positions on government funding or environmental protections, for example. Moreover, a single stance might not even hold steady from year to year. In light of the low political knowledge and engagement of the average American voter (Delli-Carpini and Keeter, 1996) it is plausible that opinions on some public policies are more rigid than others, guiding belief systems and identification toward categorization dominated by one or two preferences.

Of course, our political brains do not only ask us which solutions we would prefer be enacted. We also consult our identity with and feelings towards social groups when deciding where we may fit along the

political spectrum (Sniderman, 1970; Conover and Feldman, 1981; Achen and Bartels, 2016). Social politics itself may even dictate our preferences.

It is possible that this discussion is all wrong. Policy preferences don't influence ideological identification, Paul Sniderman and the anti-“minimalists” might argue, instead the relationship is reversed. To be sure, this paper suggests the opposite might be true. Attitudes toward different groups may influence policy preferences, but both are taken into account when Americans combine their knowledge, preferences, biases, and membership into one self-identification: “liberal,” “conservative,” or “moderate.” Either way, the ultimate goal of this paper is to know how much policy preferences are taken into account when voters construct their labels.

Whichever direction the causality runs is negligible for evaluating the variance in identification explained by the different factors in this analysis. Some issue positions might have a stronger relationship to others — it could be that they have the strongest influence on ideological self-identification. It could also be that ideological self-identification has the strongest influence on them. Whatever the case of causality here, issue preferences and group attitudes somehow come to explain ideological self-identification. What does more explaining?

3.1 Hypotheses

In light of the above, I present the following hypotheses:

3.1.1 Hypothesis 1

For the matter of causation whereby policy preferences influence ideological self-identification in the mass public, I hypothesize that policy preferences will remain stable even as ideological identity changes.

3.1.2 Hypothesis 2

Politically salient and ideologically “charged” policy preferences — also popularly called “easy issues,” from Carmines and Stimson’s “The Two Faces of Issue Voting” (1980) — will have stronger relationships to ideological self-identification than other, more nuanced policies. For example, preferences on abortions restrictions will likely be among the most significant constraining variables in this model of ideological identification, whereas preferences for funding national defense and public schools might not (Conover and Feldman 1981; Bartels 2006; Gelman and Baldassarri 2008).

3.1.3 Hypothesis 3

Group influences — such as party identification and affect towards racial and social groups — will be a stronger predictor of ideological self-identification than policy preferences among people who have low levels of political knowledge.

3.2 Approach

I plan to test these hypotheses with a variety of methods. For hypothesis 1, I will use the American National Election Study (ANES) panel survey fielded in 1972, 1974, and 1976 to assess stability of issue preference and ideological identification over time with a cross-lagged panel model.

For hypothesis 2, the assertion that hypothesis that some policy preferences will “matter more,” I identify the more influential preferences with ordinary least squares regression predicting ideological identification with eight key policy preferences, party identification, and feeling thermometer ratings (Green 2004; Lauderdale 2010), of ideological groups using data from the 1992-2012 ANES surveys.

For the third hypothesis, I test the impact of group identity on ideological identification with the same

OLS analysis above and by using experimental data that prompts identity with groups and specific political leaders/elected officials (Appendix B). I will extend my study of group membership data from the ANES with novel survey data analyzing the presence of group/individual affect in open ended responses to a question prompting justification of ideological identity. I discuss this survey experiment in depth in chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Evidence from An Existing Survey

The foundation of our modern understanding of belief systems comes from survey research. Since the contemporary birth of the subject in the mid-twentieth century, social scientists have used surveys like the American National Election Studies (ANES) to assess the policy preferences, ideological identification, and group membership (among other things) of the “average American” (Converse, 1964; Geertz, 1973; Campbell and Center, 1960). This chapter continues that trend by using ANES surveys from election years from 1992 to 2012 to dissect the relationship between ideological self-identification, issue position, and group affect (see Conover and Feldman, 1981, and Mason (2018)).

How much of our identification can be explained by the two primary factors laid out above? Are our feelings towards liberals, conservatives, Democrats and Republicans doing more “constraining,” to echo Philip Converse? Do public policy preferences add any nuance to our understanding of self-identification, or can social membership — namely, political party — explain most of the reasons that voters categorize themselves the way that they do?

4.1 What is ideological identification?

Ideological identification is a fickle thing. On the one hand, our social attachments to the labels “liberal” and “conservative” are purported to be rather strong (Mason, 2018; Ellis and Stimson, 2012). On the other hand, however, scholars have appeared to settle on an interpretation of the word “moderate” to mean very little (to borrow again from Ellis and Stimson) either “operationally” or “symbolically” (Kinder and Kalmoe, 2017).

This paper focuses on the symbolic interpretation of ideology — one defined by one’s own categorization of their beliefs that holds no inherent meaning — rather than the classic/Converse-esque operational “ideology” that is an academic interpretation of voters’ responses to questions about their issue preferences that might give clues about which “camp” they belong to. Ideological self-identification is thus different from the frequent investigation of “belief systems” (again, see (Converse, 1964), and most of the resulting literature in the latter half of the 20th century).

The measure used in this chapter is the five-point scale asked by the American National Election Study (ANES) to assess ideological identification. Respondents are asked to place themselves on a five-point response scale with the following options: very liberal, liberal, somewhat liberal, moderate, somewhat conservative, conservative, or very conservative. The distribution of those choices in the pooled 1992 - 2012 ANES survey is presented below. Refer to Appendix B for specific variable names.

Of course, this has changed over time as well. In 1992, 31% of ANES respondents who answered the question identified themselves as moderates, 41% said they were conservatives, and 29% were liberals. By 2012 those numbers had changed to 34%, 38%, and 28%, respectively.

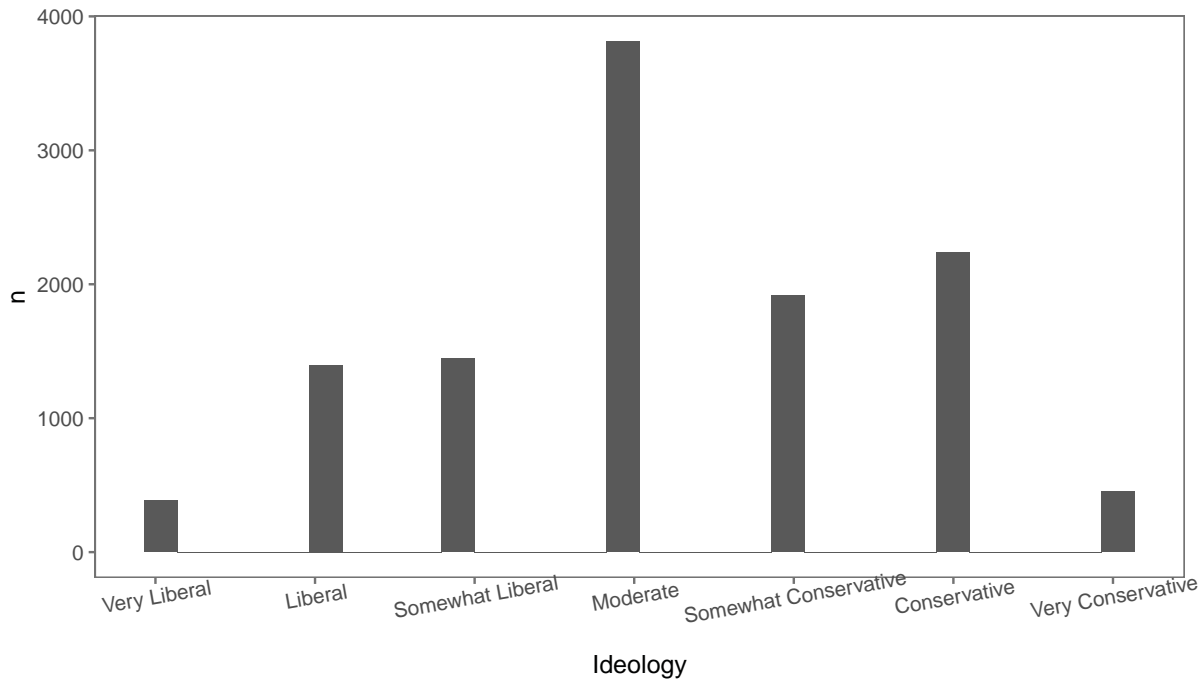


Figure 4.1: Graphs the distribution of ANES respondents who chose different categories of ideological identification

4.2 Explaining ideological identification

My investigation now turns to the differences in significance of several factors that explain the self-categorization of our belief systems. This section explores the results of statistical analysis using ordinary least squares regression to estimate ideological identification using respondent's policy preferences, party identification, and feelings towards the parties and ideologies.

$$self - identification = a + policypreferences[a - h] * b[1 - 8] +$$

$$politicalparty * b9 + groupaffect[i - m] * b[10 - 14] + e$$

Where the policy preferences included in this regression are: government spending on health care,

abortion, general government services, defense spending, spending on aid to the poor, environmental protection, level of immigration, and funding for public schools. All policy positions are coded on 7- or 5-point likert scales, with 1 being the most traditionally liberal position respondent could take and 7/5 being the most conservative.

Group affect is measured by a feeling thermometer ratings for the Democratic Party, Republican Party, conservatives, and liberals that runs on a scale from 0-100. I create net ratings for both party and ideology here, subtracting feelings toward Democrats from feeling toward Republicans and feelings toward liberals from feeling toward conservatives. The result is a “net affect” reading for both binary categorizations. I also use feeling thermometers for affect toward blacks, unions, and big business — three groups that certainly have implications for our politics.

I then recode all variables to the same scale, running from 0 to 1 with values closer to one being more conservative positions and those closer to 0 being more liberal.

I run this regression equation on 15,303 respondents to the 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012 ANES surveys. Of course, not all respondents answered every question in the surveys they were given (the ANES is famously long) so I used Multiple Imputation by Chained Equation (MICE) (Azur et al., 2011) to “fill in” answers for respondents who responded to at least half of the variables I am interested in. Fewer than 0.3% (50 of ~15,000) of respondents answered less than half of the target questionnaire. I address the “missingness” in the ANES data and whether it has consequences for the analysis in the next section. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4.1.

The resulting sample has 11,646 ANES respondents between 1992 and 2016. My analysis leave out the 3,657 respondents who did not answer the ideological self-identification question (which we do not impute as to avoid creating relationships between our independent and dependent variables).

These data tell a very important story about American ideology. Primarily, it is notable that all policy preferences save three (government spending on health care, level of legal immigration, and spending

Table 4.1: Estimating Ideology with Policy Preferences and Group Affect

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Self-reported ideology
Party ID	0.126*** (0.008)
Health care	0.050*** (0.006)
Abortion law	0.072*** (0.005)
Spending on gen. gov. services	0.038*** (0.011)
Defense spending	0.048*** (0.007)
Spending on aid to the poor	0.006 (0.007)
Environmental protections	0.084*** (0.016)
Decreasing immigration	0.014** (0.007)
Spending on public schools	0.019*** (0.006)
Feeling Thermometer: Net Conservative	0.205*** (0.005)
Net Republican	0.037*** (0.005)
Blacks	-0.007 (0.007)
Unions	0.004 (0.006)
Big Business	0.040*** (0.007)
Constant	0.343*** (0.014)
Observations	11,646
R ²	0.502
Adjusted R ²	0.502
Residual Std. Error	0.147 (df = 11631)
F Statistic	839.126*** (df = 14; 11631)
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

on public schools) remain significant after we control for party identity and affect for a variety of groups. Opinions on abortion policy and environmental protections retain the most sway among issue preferences over our self-identification and are the most important variables after party membership and feelings toward the two ideological groups.

The relative relatively small explanatory power provided by party identification is perhaps the most influential finding of this section. While some modern, mainstream interpretations of ideology suggest that party membership explains the vast majority of ideological identification — after all, how could a liberal remain in a party that supports deporting immigrants, defunding the EPA, building a wall along the southern U.S. border, etc.? — this does not appear to be the case. Even after I adjust the model to take party identification into account, respondents' policy preferences remain significant. Issue positions on abortion and environmental protection might even rival the importance of party identification.

However, our ideology is not only policy preferences. Even after controlling party identification and policy preferences, our “affect,” or valenced feelings of positivity/negativity, toward different groups still matter. Most notably, the variable in the model that has by far the most sway over our ideological orientation is whether or not we feel strongly toward the label “liberal” or “conservative.” With a movement from least favorable to conservatives to most favorable being associated with a 0.205 increase in conservatism, it is almost twice as powerful a variable as party identification. Much of our identification is affect toward the labels themselves.

Though this finding is significant because of the magnitude of the relationship to identification, it is not surprising. Pamela Conover and Stanley Feldman wrote in 1982:

In summary, the basic premise underlying our model is that ideological self-placement is determined directly by the individual's evaluation of the two major ideological labels or groups—liberals and conservatives. [...] Individuals may vary, however, in the degree to

which they derive their evaluations of ideological labels from cognitive sources such as issue preferences or emotional sources such as political symbols. (Conover and Feldman, 1981)

This is reasonable, and in some line of thinking, the only way we could imagine this relationship unfolds. However, Conover and Feldman go on to conclude something that has certainly changed throughout the years:

The finding that ideological self-identification is strongly influenced by evaluations of liberals and conservatives takes on added significance when considered in conjunction with the following finding: though evaluations of liberals and conservatives are both strongly related to self-identification, they have only a weak negative relationship with one another; Pearson's r equals $-.17$ for those respondents having an ideological self-identification. (Conover and Feldman, 1981)

Rather, I suspect the influence of affect toward the two ideological poles *is* strong and *is* significant now, with “now” being the operative word. The data in 2012 likely differ from Conover and Feldman's analysis in 1981. Indeed, the ANES surveys bear this out. Starting in 1992 and moving to each election year until 2012, the coefficient on a simple linear regression predicting affect for liberals alone (measured in the ANES feeling thermometer for liberals) solely with affect for conservatives (measured in the ANES feeling thermometer for conservatives) becomes much more negative over time.

The coefficient changed from -0.33 in 1992 to -0.27 in 1996, to -0.17 , -0.31 , -0.21 , and finally to -0.45 in 2012. In each year, there is a statistically significant relationship between the two feeling thermometers. Only the coefficient in 2012 is significantly different than the year previous.

This dramatically more negative impact of affect toward liberals on affect toward conservatives, and vice versa, suggests that the two ideological groups have become more affectively polarized in the last decade, with much of the change happening after the election of Barack Obama in 2012. In sum, net affect for conservatives likely holds so much sway over current ideological self-identification precisely

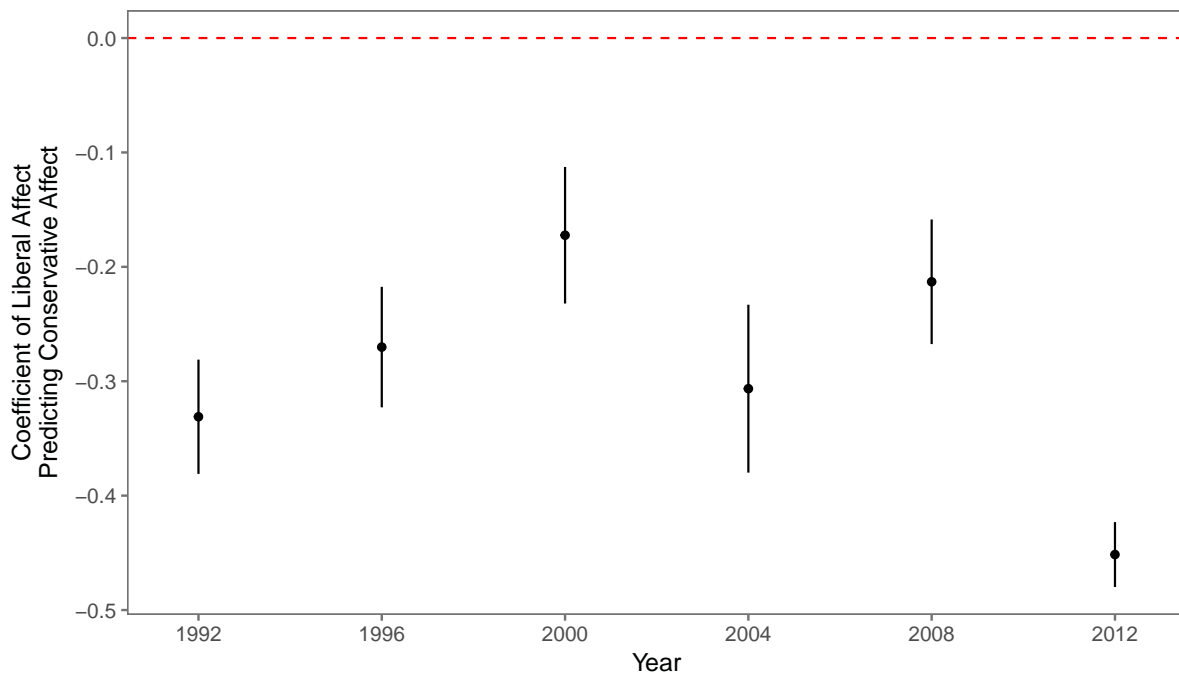


Figure 4.2: The relationship between feelings toward liberals and conservatives has grown significantly more negative since 2008

because of its modern, polarizing qualities. Liberals don't like being called conservatives, as is the reverse true of conservatives being called liberals. We will explore the roles of this (mis)categorization more in chapter 5.

For now I answer the following query: which variables are doing more constraining of our belief systems: partisan identification, policy preferences, or social attitudes? Can I glean any additional information from comparing models specifying all three in different intervals.

4.3 Three different models of ideological identification

Though I find strong evidence for the importance of preferences in belief systems even after controlling for social membership, it is worth considering the differences among the different covariates in the model. To do this, I run three different versions of the OLS regression model estimating ideological

identification.

The first model uses only party identification to predict self-reported identification. The second folds in policy preferences on top of party identification. The third model also includes the thermometer ratings of the two parties and ideological labels.

Table 4.2 details the differences in the explanatory power of the three regression equations, as well as the changing significance of the variables in our model. Iterating up the ladder of equations increases the explained variance of respondents' ideological identification by roughly 0.12 each time: I find that party identification explains roughly 30% of variance in self-reported ideology, adding the variables for policy preferences increased the r-squared again to 42%, and adding the feeling thermometer readings increases explained variance to 53%. The significance of party identification in the model decreases at every step.

Table 4.2: Estimating Ideology, 3 Different Models

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
		Self-reported ideology	
Party ID	0.391*** (0.005)	0.262*** (0.006)	0.126*** (0.008)
Health care		0.089*** (0.006)	0.050*** (0.006)
Abortion law		0.122*** (0.006)	0.072*** (0.005)
Spending on gen. gov. services		0.098*** (0.012)	0.038*** (0.011)
Defense spending		0.102*** (0.007)	0.048*** (0.007)
Spending on aid to the poor		0.024*** (0.007)	0.006 (0.007)
Environmental protections		0.188*** (0.017)	0.084*** (0.016)
Decreasing immigration		0.043*** (0.007)	0.014** (0.007)
Spending on public schools		0.035*** (0.007)	0.019*** (0.006)
Net Conservative			0.205*** (0.005)
Net Republican			0.037*** (0.005)
Blacks			-0.007 (0.007)
Unions			0.004 (0.006)
Big Business			0.040*** (0.007)
Constant	0.392*** (0.003)	0.113*** (0.010)	0.343*** (0.014)
Observations	11,646	11,646	11,646
R ²	0.323	0.414	0.502
Adjusted R ²	0.323	0.413	0.502
Residual Std. Error	0.172 (df = 11644)	0.160 (df = 11636)	0.147 (df = 11631)
F Statistic	5,545.174*** (df = 1; 11644)	912.219*** (df = 9; 11636)	839.126*** (df = 14; 11631)

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Notably, in the third model that included feeling thermometer readings for group affect, the significance of all policy preferences decrease as net affect for conservatives takes the strongest predictive role in the equation.

As the relationship between ideology and partisanship has changed over time (Levendusky, 2009), there is also reason to believe that the relationship between ideological identification, policy preferences, and other social membership has evolved as well. Figure 4.3 depicts the results of the three, charting the adjusted R-squared of each model for each survey year between 1992 and 2012, inclusive.

Not only does the figure show that each additional group of variables increases our ability to explain ideological self-identification considerably, we also see that the explanatory power of all three models have increased considerably over time. Notably the model predicting ideology solely with party identification has doubled its explained variance in ideological identification since 1992.

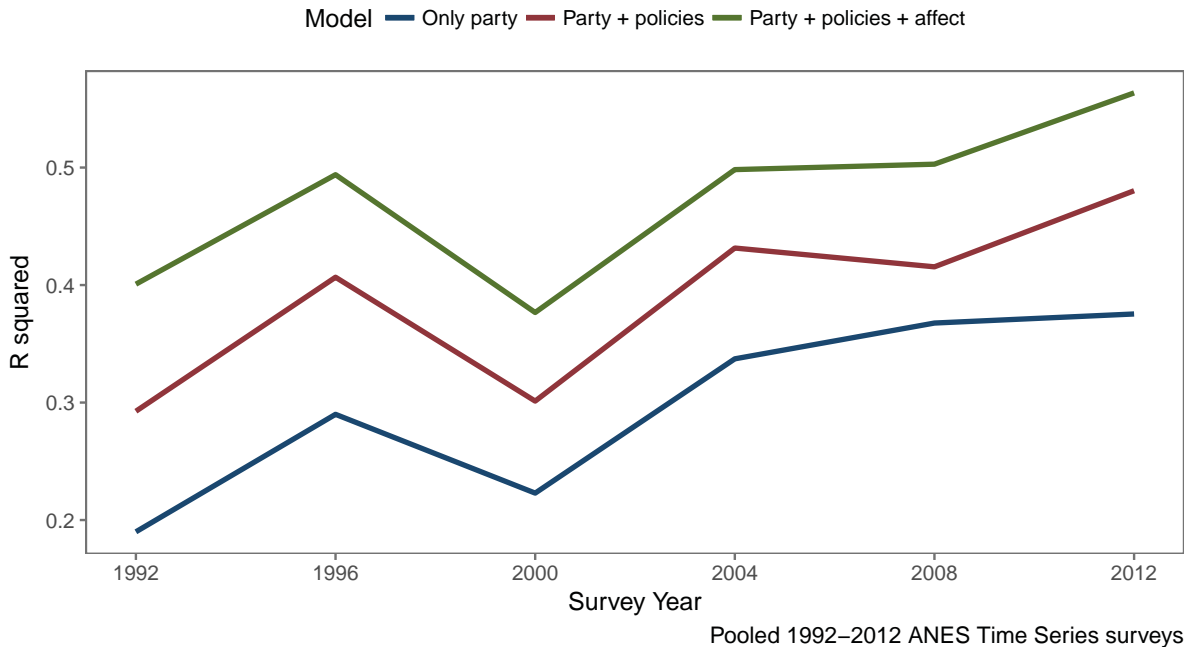


Figure 4.3: Explanatory power of three models predicting ideological identification over time

Although the predictive power of political party identification has increased by 90% since 1992, the ex-

planatory power of a model that factors in all three major components (partisanship, policy preferences, and group affect) has increased only 32%. This might suggest that ideology has been tied to our policy preferences and group membership for some time, and over the past two decades, political parties have grown more aligned to one issue or another and to one group or the other (again see Levendusky, 2009). It could suggest still that all three of these measures have become more correlated since the 1990s.

Is ideological identity becoming closer related to policy preferences and/or social identity, explaining the increase in R-squared? Figure 2 presents evidence that this is true. However, dropping political party identification from the full model run on respondents to ANES surveys since 2010 barely decreases explanatory power (from 0.50 to 0.48). This suggests that voter attitudes about political parties must have some similarities to attitudes about other groups and some policy preferences. Given what we know about the relationship between policy preferences and partisan identity (Sniderman et al., 1991), this comes as no surprise.

One may also posit that, since the relationship between policy preferences and social attitudes have changed over time, that a select variable (or variables) is (or are) doing the extra constraining in voters ideologies in 2012 as compared to 1992. Using the same output above — from the linear regression models re-run for the six elections in the data — I can compare coefficients for each variable over the years and determine if there has been a large shift in their importance over time.

This hypothesis is incorrect for every variable except party identification, which is the only reading of policy preference or social attitude that has a coefficient in 2012 that is different from its 1992 coefficient at a level that reaches statistical significance. In 1992, a movement from the most Democratic to most Republican end of the party spectrum corresponded to a 0.08 increase in the conservatism of one's ideological identification. Though it is not rock-solid retrospective proof of Levendusky's 2009 theory about partisan sorting, this temporal comparison of coefficients certainly suggest that this is the case.

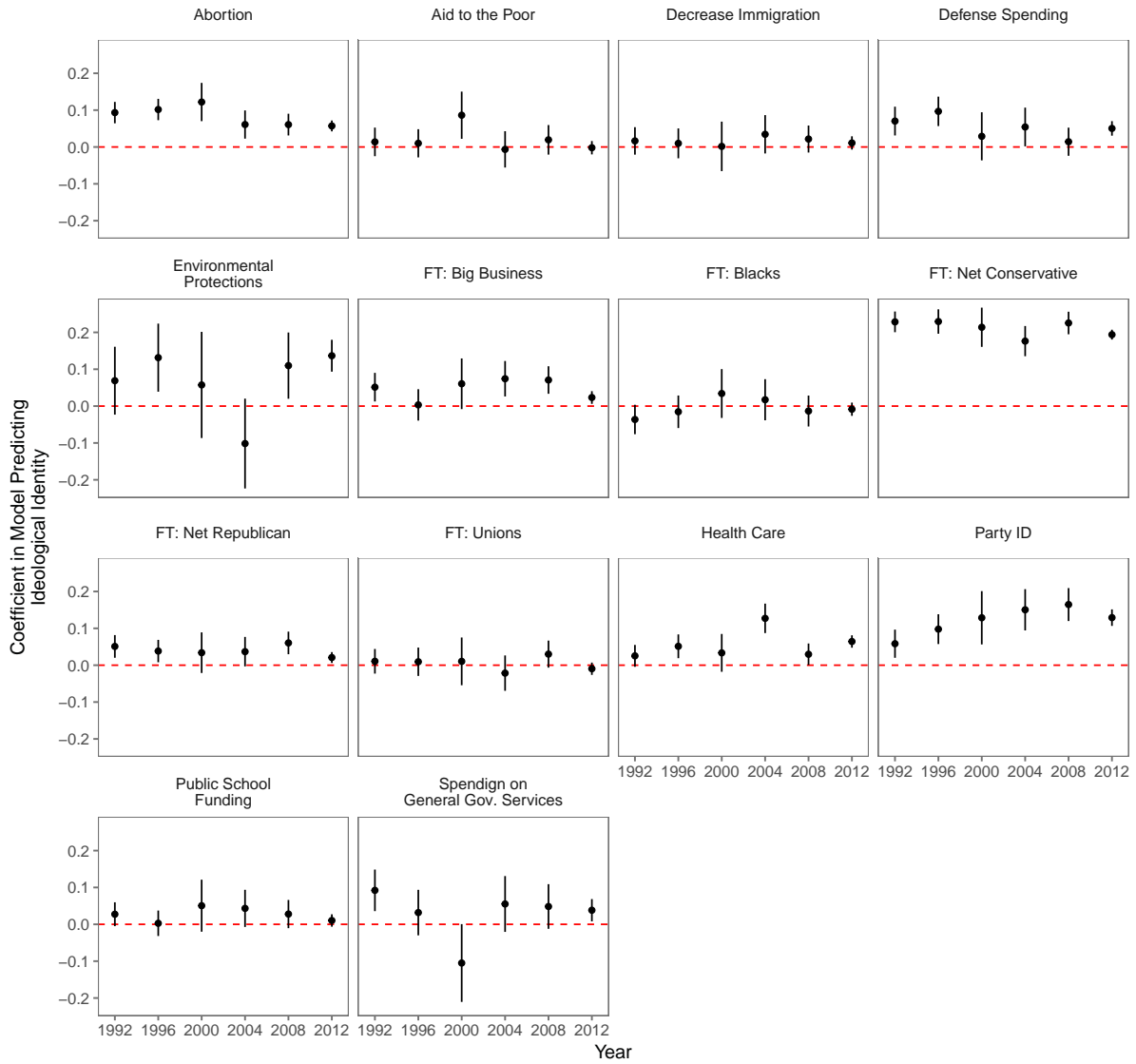


Figure 4.4: Coefficients of policy preferences and social affect in model predicting ideological identification over time

These three models of ideological self-identification provide us with a useful starting point in determining both which political policies matter more to Americans, however, there is still more to uncover: What matters when they don't? Among voters with ill-constrained belief systems, are social cues doing more work in helping categorizations form? The next section of this chapter suggests an answer to that question.

4.4 Ideological identification and political knowledge

One of the most important discoveries in the past three decades of political science is the low level of political knowledge held by many Americans (Delli-Carpini and Keeter, 1996). Scholars have also shown that low political knowledge gives way to ill-constrained belief systems (Converse, 1964) as respondents don't have enough information on a given policy to form an opinion and instead can select pseudo-random issue positions, possibly even making them up on the spot. Low knowledge voters are expected to rely more on heuristics, like party identification and group affect, than their (low) knowledge of politics when making political decisions (Sniderman et al., 1991; Achen and Bartels, 2016; Greene, 2004).

To determine whether low-knowledge voters in my multiple-factor context behave as has been theorized, I specify two different ordinary least squares regression models that divide up the ANES panel into two groups, low and high-knowledge respondents, using the full range of variables to predict ideological identification. Building off of the literature on political knowledge, I incorporate the traditional approach using the ANES question asking respondents to recall the party in control of House of Representatives to assess differences in ideological identification among Americans with both a high and low level of political knowledge. The results of these two models are presented in Table 4.3.

Evident in the results is that low-knowledge voters do — even after controlling for all 8 issue positions and party identification — rely on their affect towards liberals, conservatives, Democrats and Repub-

licans more than high-knowledge voters, though slightly. Perhaps more important is that respondents who score incorrectly on our knowledge question rely more on the group thermometer for unions, while net feelings toward Republicans is not significant. The influence of party identification is also lower for the low-knowledge pack.

On the policy side, high-knowledge respondents relied less on their feelings toward general government spending and environmental protections than the other group. High-knowledge ANES respondents also relied on their opinions about school funding and immigration reduction, whereas the two issues were not significant for the model run on the low-knowledge group.

Table 4.3: The Effects of Political Knowledge on Ideological Identification

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Self-reported ideology	
	Low Political Knowledge (1)	High Political Knowledge (2)
Party ID	0.078*** (0.015)	0.151*** (0.009)
Health care	0.048*** (0.010)	0.048*** (0.007)
Abortion law	0.057*** (0.010)	0.081*** (0.006)
Spending on general government services	0.032 (0.021)	0.042*** (0.013)
Defense spending	0.023* (0.013)	0.061*** (0.008)
Spending on aid to the poor	0.016 (0.013)	0.002 (0.008)
Environmental protections	0.093*** (0.032)	0.076*** (0.018)
Decreasing immigration	-0.007 (0.013)	0.025*** (0.008)
Spending on public schools	0.031** (0.013)	0.014* (0.007)
Feeling Thermometer: Net Conservative	0.227*** (0.010)	0.191*** (0.006)
Net Republican	0.047*** (0.010)	0.034*** (0.006)
Blacks	-0.015 (0.013)	-0.004 (0.008)
Unions	0.014 (0.012)	-0.002 (0.007)
Big Business	0.039*** (0.013)	0.040*** (0.008)
Constant	0.398*** (0.026)	0.316*** (0.016)
Observations	3,774	7,872
R ²	0.345	0.574
Adjusted R ²	0.342	0.573
Residual Std. Error	0.164 (df = 3759)	0.138 (df = 7857)
F Statistic	141.134*** (df = 14; 3759)	756.930*** (df = 14; 7857)

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Importantly, this approach alone is not enough to give us a clear view of the role of knowledge in explaining ideological identification. Instead, it is more appropriate to run an ordinary least squares

regression that contains an interaction variable with knowledge for each of our policy and social membership variables. This method allows us to assess, with statistical certainty, whether or not y variable plays a different role among voters with x level of political knowledge.

I present the results of this below in Figure 4.5. This approach shows that knowledge only significantly moderates how respondent’s utilized party identification and feelings toward liberals/conservatives in constructing their ideological identification — all other variables generally played an equal role among low and high knowledge respondents.

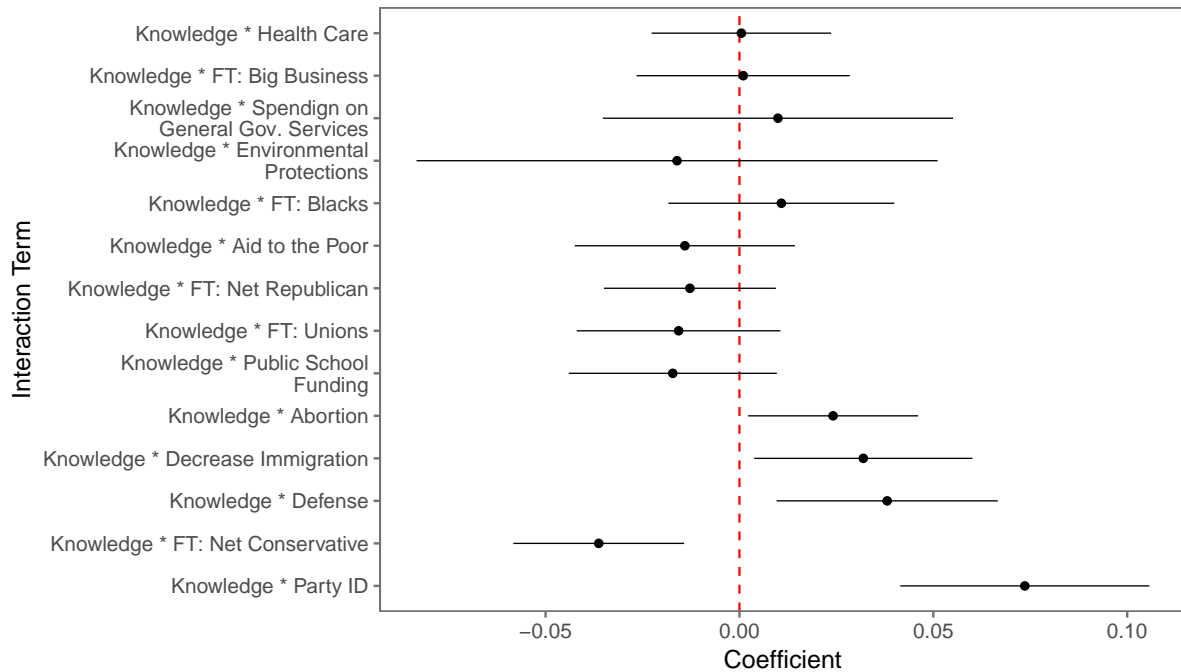


Figure 4.5: Coefficient plot for interaction variables in the full model (3) that adds interaction terms with knowledge for each measure of policy preference and group attitude

This evidence suggests that the hypothesis that respondents with low political knowledge will rely more on social identity than on policy preferences when determining their ideological identification is correct. This being said, the model alone does not prove the causal role of knowledge in our identity-based belief systems.

The social identity variables offer up a more challenging puzzle. The knowledge interaction shows

that voters with higher political knowledge actually rely more on party identification than their low-knowledge neighbors. The feeling thermometer measurement for net-conservatism decreased in significance, as theorized, for high-knowledge voters.

This conflicting evidence is cause for reconsideration of the literature on affect and social membership. Lilliana Mason finds that “regardless of a person’s level of issue constraint, social identification with liberals or conservatives reliably predicts substantial social distancing from ideological outgroups” (2018, p. 19). In terms of this thesis’s model, Mason’s findings would explain why there is much importance placed on affect toward ideological groups, but not party polarization. Similarly,

What is the role of party identification in a knowledge-interacted model of ideology, then? Why would politically knowledgeable voters put more weight on politically social attitudes than low-knowledge voters? The research says, after all, that party identification is a useful heuristic to voters who don’t otherwise have specific policy knowledge (Sniderman et al., 1991; Schaffner and Streb, 2002). In a model where both affect toward the two ideological groups and partisanship are taken into account, I think the findings from this chapter do make some, if not complete, sense.

When a low-knowledge voter takes into account the two parallel identities — liberal and Democrat or Republican and conservative — they likely have less a sense of what political party means than a high-knowledge alternative. In this sense, affective proximity toward a group might be a more suitable replacement for political knowledge when voters develop their ideological self-categorization than identification with a party with which they might not be acquainted. It could be that high-political-knowledge Americans have stronger relationships between party identification and ideology and are less likely to be moderates, accentuating this relationship.

4.5 Conclusion

The ANES survey data shine a light on a clear destination for our inquiry — suggesting both (1) which policies hold more weight in mass belief systems and (2) what voters who don't know much about political policies rely on when categorizing their beliefs.

For the former, I found confirmation for what most scholars might suspect. The “easy” issues such as abortion held more weight in the respondent's belief systems than “harder” issues, like how many immigrants should be allowed in the country or how much money the government should allocate for defense spending (Carmines and Stimson, 1980). Attitudes on easy issues often correlate more with voters' social identities, so it's no surprise that they would have larger coefficients in the models. That is where the fun starts:

This research uncovered a much more powerful role for affect toward ideological groups than I had previously believed was the case. Given that the coefficient for voters' net feeling thermometer rating of conservatives over liberals was more than twice as large as the runner-up variable, it is no understatement to say that this factor is the most important in a model predicting ideological identification. Trying this back to the larger question, I find that when voters aren't using policy preferences to determine their ideology they are using an affective evaluation of the labels to do so — but even if they are factoring in issue attitudes (e.g. have high political knowledge), they still aren't likely escaping the role that affect plays here. Still, the process by which we align ourselves with an ideology is not void of policy preferences.

The role of social affect in our belief systems, in sum, is understated (often almost entirely missed) by the classical work into belief systems, but could be overstated by scholarship that posits an explicitly identity-based foundation to ideology.

Yet there is still a question pulling at my ear: what about the role of ideological identity as social

membership?” Considering what we know about the role of social identity — namely voters will change their policy preferences if exposed to their party’s formal positions about those policies (Cohen, 2003) — one can imagine that ideological self-categorization might operate the same way. Is it replacing a reliance on policy positions or coming after it, suggesting that voters might use their own categorization to put themselves in their “buckets?” Chapter 5 suggests answers to these questions using a survey experiment.

Chapter 5

Evidence from a Survey Experiment

To bolster the findings from chapter 3, in this section I explore answers to my first and third hypotheses by fielding a survey experiment. Per my first assertion, this experiment establishes the presence of (and resulting direction) of a causal arrow between ideological identity and policy preferences. The experiment measures the liberalness of policy preferences before and after a respondent has been randomly conditioned with a manipulation of their ideological identification. The effect of treatment — priming of ideological thinking — can be interpreted as the effect of ideology on policy preferences. This approach allows us to disentangle the causality of ideological identification.

In working with my broader theory that policy preferences and social identity are two factors of the amalgamation process that is “identity-based” ideology (Mason, 2018), this experiment provides empirical motivation for arguing that the causal arrow does not point the other direction. That is, if ideological identification has strong an impact on policy preferences, the formation of our self-identification is likely not based on issue attitudes.

5.1 Motivation

The idea that making a social identity salient to an individual would influence their behavior is not new, and neither is the use of survey experiments in testing this. The approach has been put to use in laboratory experiments in the past to dissect the influence of racial and gender identifications on economic behavior (Benjamin et al., 2010).

In this study, I explore whether manipulating ideological self-identification has effects on respondent’s policy preferences. If ideology is a deeply-held construct for voters and they hold their identification in high regard, they ought to react “downstream” to being told that they are categorized as something they are not. If a voter is a moderate, for example, but they are told they are more liberal than the vast majority of Americans, there should be detectable movement in their opinions in the liberal direction as they assume a new liberal identity.

This paper uses the method presented by Benjamin et. al. in 2010 by randomly manipulating ideological identity among respondents to assess change in policy preferences.

5.2 Data and Design

I conducted a survey experiment to examine the effect of ideological identification on policy preferences. The sample of 772 Americans comes from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk platform and was conducted from March 26 to April 1, 2018. The survey experiment first asks each respondent for their preferences on a set of 5 public policy preferences. In keeping with the analysis of the American National Election Study data in chapter 4, their answers are scaled from 0 to 1.

Randomly assigning treatment, respondents are then prompted either a random statement of their ideological identification — such as “According to your given policy preferences, you are more conser-

vative[/liberal] than 75% of Americans” — or a message telling them to go on to the next question. I determine which treatment to give by conditioning the treatment on responses to the abortion position question at the start of the survey; respondents who answer with one of the two more traditionally left-leaning options get either the liberal treatment or control, while “conservative” respondents get either their treatment or the control. By conditioning treatment this way, I avoid telling a clearly liberal respondent that they are more conservative than three-fourths of the American public.

The manipulation text also includes a check to identify whether or not respondents “buy” the survey’s categorization of their beliefs, prompting them to respond either “Accurate” or “Inaccurate” to the question “Do you feel that this categorization is accurate or inaccurate?”

Finally, the experiment asks respondents to give their preferences on another set of 5 public policies. The full questionnaire for this survey is detailed in Appendix A.

I test the impact of ideological identification on policy preferences by comparing the mean policy preference of the five post-manipulation issue questions for four groups: liberal treatment, liberal control, conservative treatment, and conservative control. If the treatment groups show significantly higher/lower mean policy preferences than the control group, I am able to suggest that ideological identification *does* significantly impact policy preferences.

However, that is not the case.

5.3 Results

The manipulation has null effects. The p-value for students-t tests of the differences in mean policy preference among the treatment and control group for both ideological categories are greater than 0.10 (and nearly 0.5 for conservative respondents). Not only that, but the direction of the effect is actually *opposite* of what ought to be the theorized effect.

I can also use a linear model (I actually specify two, one for each ideological group) predicting the mean policy preference of a respondent with a binary variable indicating whether or not they received treatment to assess the relation. Below I present a coefficient plot that suggests (with statistical insignificance) that liberal treatment actually increased the *conservatism* of respondent's policy positions, whereas treatment among conservatives had a counterfactual liberal effect.

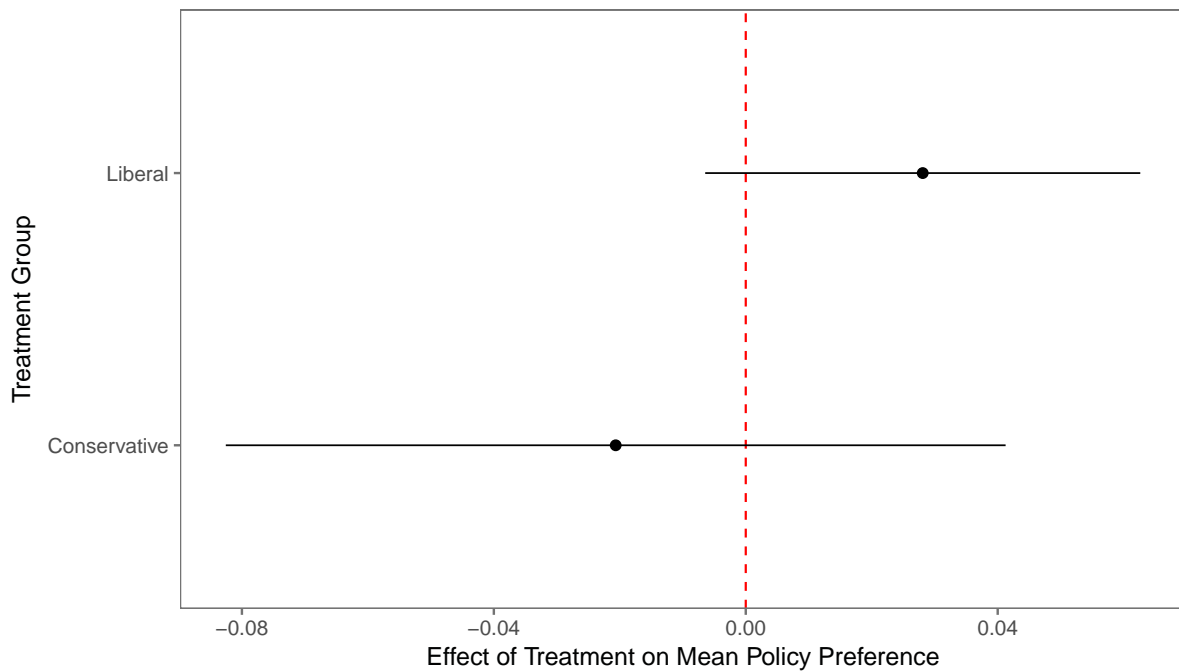


Figure 5.1: Coefficient plot for the effect of manipulating ideology on mean policy preference across five issue positions

How could this be?

It is possible that the survey experiment had too heavy a hand in manipulating respondents. In the two figures that follow, I have separated out the effects of treatment for respondents who received the treatment and responded that they thought it was either (1) an accurate categorization of their beliefs or (2) an inaccurate categorization. Of the 403 respondents who received treatment, roughly one-third said that they did not believe their categorization was the correct one. Ninety-nine of the 300 respondents in the liberal treatment group said this and 35 of the 103 conservatives said the same).

For survey-takers that answered that the manipulation was accurate, there was a significant ($p=0.031$), but minute, effect of manipulating ideological identification on policy preferences. The -0.04 coefficient for liberal manipulation can be interpreted to mean that the treatment group is roughly one-twenty fifth more liberal than the control group. In other words, since the issue scale runs from 0 to 1, a difference of -0.04 is inconsequential — even while significant — for ideological identity. The effect of treatment among conservatives was positive in the expected direction, though statistically insignificant.

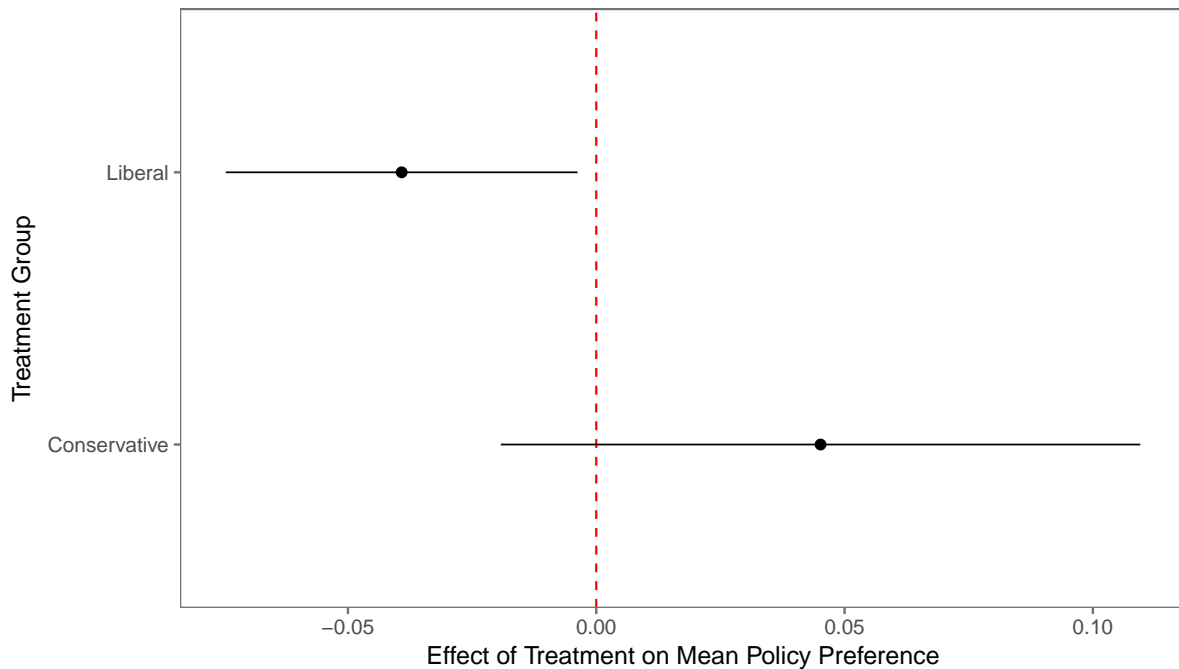


Figure 5.2: Coefficient plot for the effect of manipulating ideology on mean policy preference across five issue positions — among respondents who did believe the treatment

On the other hand, treatment effects among those *who did not* believe the manipulation (roughly 33% of respondents who received the treatment) were large and significant in the opposite direction, likely explaining why the experiment has null effects aggregate. “Unsuccessful” liberal treatment had a effect of -0.156 on mean policy preference, whereas unsuccessful conservative treatment had a 0.164 effect. A movement of 0.14 on the rescale $0-1$ variables represents a jump from one response category to the other on any standard 7-point scale. (e.g. “somewhat support” to “support” or “liberal” to “very liberal liberal,” etc.). In other words, effects this large have meaningful consequences for ideology.

It could be an unexpected, but significant, contribution to this field to learn that mis-primed ideological identification has such large effects on our policy preferences.

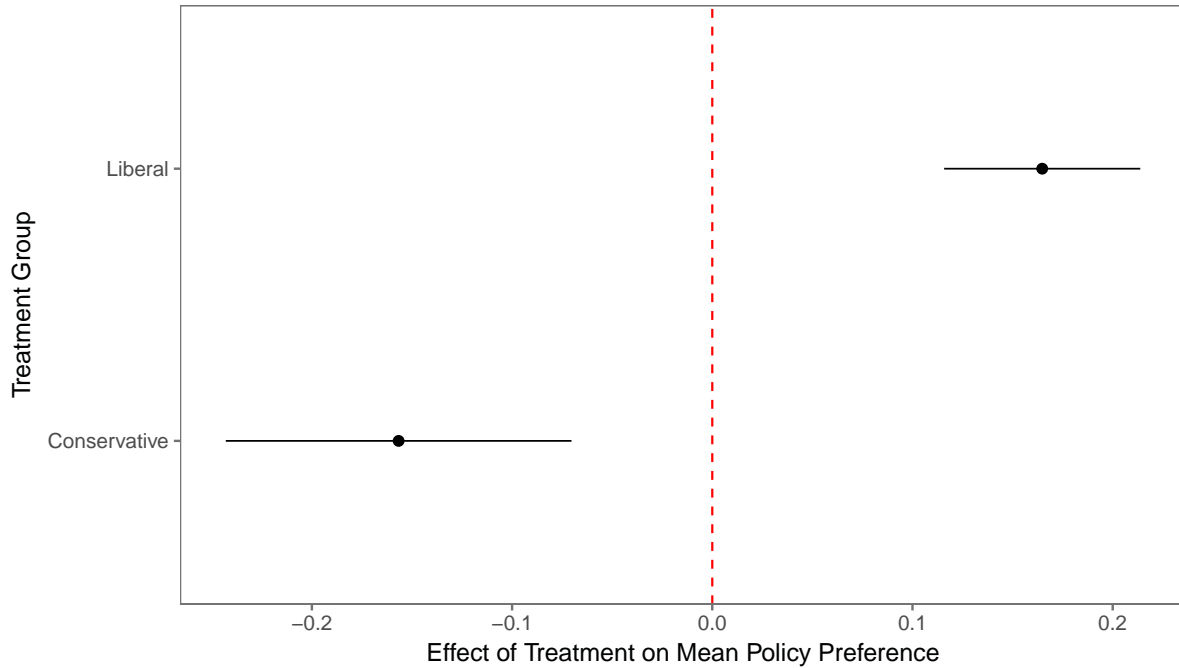


Figure 5.3: Coefficient plot for the effect of manipulating ideology on mean policy preference across five issue positions — among respondents who did not believe the treatment

Although the “failed” manipulation produces movement in ideology in the opposite direction of treatment, I find this to be congruent with a social-identity theory of ideological identification. After all, why would the backfiring treatment cause movement in preferences if respondents did not hold dear their ideological identification? In other words, the large changes in mean policy preference among members who said the survey’s ideological categorization was incorrect is likely caused because they identify with *the opposite* ideological categorization, perhaps pushing them to prove their identification with their issue preferences.

In sum, I find small effects in the hypothesized direction for those who believed the manipulation, and for those who did not believe it, I find large effect in the opposite direction — exactly what we should expect if ideological identity motivated change in policy preferences.

What is worth discussing, then, is why there exists such a large difference in magnitude of the treatment effects for those who *did not* believe the treatment, as compared to very small effects for those who did buy their manipulation.

5.4 Negative Affect in Ideological Identity

The large resistance to ideological mis-categorization in my survey experiment could be a natural product of what scholars call negative partisanship and affective polarization — the two processes that assert that some degree of party membership is due to opposition to the other party, rather than support of one’s own, and that our evaluations of the outgroup are increasingly negative while our feelings toward the ingroup remain somewhat positive (Webster and Abramowitz, 2017). Abramowitz and Webster write in 2017:

Growing ideological distance appears to have been an important factor contributing to the rise of negative affect toward the opposing party and its leaders over the past several decades. There has always been a strong inverse relationship between ideological distance and affective evaluations of the opposing party—the greater the perceived distance from the opposing party, the more negatively party identifiers and leaners view the opposing party. (p. 627, see also Figure 2)

The authors’ finding that negative affect and perceived distance in policy preferences is a good justification for the backlash observed among the mis-primed survey respondents. If voters are more likely to observe the other group as ideologically far from their “true” point, when placed in that group by the survey manipulation, we should expect the swing in policy preferences to be large. This is true so long as the respondent is trying to prove their true self-identified ideology.

To be sure, this inquiry is not concerned with the party membership portion of the story. That voters

evaluate the other party as more negative does not necessarily mean that they evaluate the other ideological group as more negative.

I can test this hypothesis by revisiting the American National Election Study time series data since 1992 and assess whether there is a difference between each ideological group's mean net conservative feeling thermometer rating, and if this has changed significantly over time.

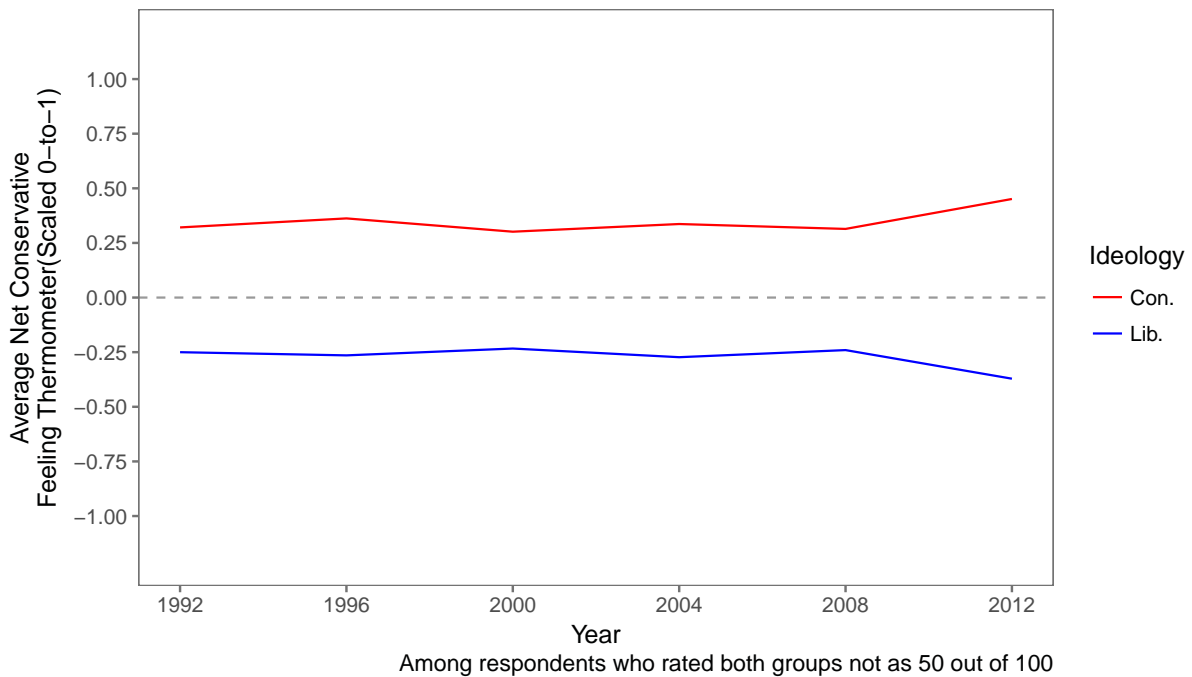


Figure 5.4: Mean net conservative feeling thermometer rating by party identification

It is clear in the ANES data that there are differences among the two liberal/conservative poles in their evaluation of the groups. Based on the broader conclusions from chapter 4, this is very expected; the net conservative rating would not have a very, very significant impact on self-identified ideology if the differences among groups weren't significant. Indeed, in a bivariate model setting the net conservative rating as the dependent variable and ideological self-identification as the independent variable, the latter has a statistically significant coefficient (at the $p=0.05$ level). In Figure 5.4, I show that there are indeed large differences in the mean net conservative ratings by ideological self-identification. These differences have grown steadily larger voter time.

That is to say that liberals/conservatives definitely have varying levels of affect toward the party. And if this is true, the observed behavior among mis-primed survey respondents is well explained. Conservative (liberal) voters don't want to be identified as liberals (conservatives), and they'll use issue positions to prove their ideology to you if you categorize them incorrectly.

5.5 Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter offers a somewhat compelling conclusion about the opposite of my broader research question. Using a survey experiment to assess the causal arrow extending from ideological self-identification toward policy preferences (the opposite of the broader model specification, to be sure) I found mixed results suggesting for a mild positive relationship between the two.

Although the results of the experiment wash out in aggregate, there is some hope within the cross-tabulations of the data.

Survey respondents in the treatment group — recall that manipulation was a priming of ideological identification based on the individual's stance on abortion quality — showed small movement in the hypothesized direction when they answered that we primed them with the correct ideological identity. However, the treatment effect, though statistically significant for the liberal group of respondents, is not large enough to even move a person's policy preference significantly on a standard seven or five-point issue scale. Correctly-treated survey takers, in other words, did not move as much as from somewhat to strongly supporting a liberal/conservative policy.

On the other hand, among respondent's who did *not* receive the correct ideological priming (roughly one-third of the treatment group responded "incorrect" to a question asking if the assigned ideology was the right one) effects were large and significant in the opposite direction of the hypothesis — a

movement of roughly 0.16, or one point on a standard seven-point scale.

With correctly-manipulated respondents moving mildly in the hypothesized direction and incorrectly-manipulated respondents moving strongly in the opposite direction, there is some evidence to suggest that ideological identification could have a causal role on voters' policy preferences. This would certainly match expectations based off of the literature on the role of party identification on policy preferences.

However, much more research is needed in this area, and scholars would make a good contribution by research the discrepancy in treatment effects for correctly and incorrectly primed respondents. Furthermore, accurate manipulation of ideological identity in a survey experiment setting should likely (1) use less of a heavy hand or (2) more calculatingly categorize voters in manipulating their ideological identity to assess change in policy preferences.

Chapter 6

Discussion

This honors thesis has taken me through a long and winding road of scientific inquiry. Through the process, I have made quite a few contributions to scholarly understanding of ideological self-identification, largely by demystifying what that means — and perhaps more importantly, what it does not mean — to voters in modern American using both existing and experimental survey data. This chapter lays out those conclusions and shows how they fit into our broader understanding of American ideology and mass belief systems. I also lay out goals for future research into the subject.

6.1 Self-identified ideology is a product of multiple inputs

My primary argument in this honors thesis is that ideological identification is a product of multiple inputs. To use Lilliana Mason’s words, we are both “identity-based” and “issue-based” thinkers (2018). Voters care about affect-driven social ties as well as policy preferences. Our belief systems are an amalgamation of factors. As this thesis uncovers, social affect is the driving force in that amalgamation.

This idea is not original. Pamela Conover and Stanley Feldman showed this well when specifying

a model that translated policy preferences and social attitudes into evaluations of the two ideological labels (1981). Their conceptualization of self-identified ideology differed from the predominate academic interpretation at the time that specified a belief system driven by our preferences for certain government policy and the “constraint” between those issue attitudes (Converse, 1964). The disconnect between belief systems and ideological self-identification is necessarily a social one, our feelings toward a group being mostly group-driven.

Where Conover and Feldman found a weak negative relationship between feelings toward liberals and conservatives, however, I uncover a much more negative relationship between the two. The power in explaining ideology comes much from the polarized nature of our evaluations of the two “bipolar” (to use Conover and Feldman’s terminology) groups.

To be sure, there are not just two categorizations of ideological identity. This paper treats ideology as a spectrum — with identification asked on the standard 7-point scale — in accordance with a vast literature on the subject [Poole and Rosenthal (1985); kinderandkalmoe2017].

An (though not exclusively) affect-driven ideological identity is not unprecedented. Recent scholarship investigating the rise of affective polarization in the public finds striking levels of negative feelings toward the outgroup political party (Webster and Abramowitz, 2017). It is not inconceivable that affective polarization would also have consequences for ideological labels as well. However, ideology is not only a product of our affect toward the two labels. We also factor in policy preferences and our identification with other groups like political parties. We have *both* an “operational” issue-based and a “symbolic” identity-based ideology (Ellis and Stimson, 2012; Mason, 2018), rather than *either* one type being the predominate influence in aggregate.

My analysis of survey data from the 1992 through 2012 American National Election Study surveys finds that, even after controlling for attitudes toward social affect and our membership with a political party, policy preferences still hold sway over our self-identified ideology. One can imagine a Republican voter

who has very warm feelings toward conservatives and big business. However, if this individual supports pro-choice abortion policy alongside environmental protections at the cost of regulating business, their beliefs are at odds with their party identification. Why? This thesis posits that feelings toward the ideological labels themselves are the answer.

As my research question hypothesized, some policy preferences hold more sway over our ideology than others. I find much evidence for this in the ANES. Issues that may be “easy” for voters to decide on — perhaps they have ties to social affect or are part of the socialization that happens early in life — stand out as the most influential. Preferences for environmental protections, access to abortion, and government-funded healthcare have the largest coefficients in my larger model specification.

For policy-minded voters, these are the policies that “matter more.” And when these policies don’t matter, the social attitude variables pick up the slack. This is especially true for our feelings toward the two ideological groups. As a final note, this is even more true for low-knowledge voters than those who are educated about politics — something else we should expect, based on the literature.

6.2 Identification with a political party might be less important than we think

In a segment on CNN’s *Smerconish*, hosted by political reporter Michael Smerconish, Senior Editor of National Review Jonah Goldberg said the following:

It used to be if I asked you if you were a Republican or Democrat forty years ago, I had to ask you followup questions to find out if you were a liberal or conservative. Today the social science is pretty settled; partisan affiliation tells you more about someone than race, gender, education and sometimes religion. [Partisanship] is becoming a basically secular religion for people... (Smerconish, 2018)

As far as predicting ideological self-identification goes, my research pokes a very large hole in Goldberg's argument.

One of the more influential findings from the main study of the American National Election Study data is that political party has less a direct correlation with ideological identity than is frequently assumed in political dialogue. Where many assume a relationship close to 1-to-1 Republican/conservative, this is not in fact what the data support, even in modern America. While the correlation between the two has grown stronger throughout the years (the Pearson's correlation between the two in 1992 was a 0.43), it is by no means perfect (0.6 in 2012).

Moreover, it is popularly theorized that party identification is a proxy for issue and social attitudes (Sniderman et al., 1991). The methods employed in this paper do not address this hypothesis directly, but to attest to it tangentially. If it is the case that identification with a political party influences voter preferences before the amalgamation stage of forming ideological identity, then there is enough residual impact of policy preferences that they are still significant in the simple OLS regression model. Though one may posit that the policy preferences and party identification are so collinear that they remain significant even though they are not, the correlation between the questions do not bear this out. A matrix of correlations for all policies is presented in Appendix B.

While this paper does nothing to contest the case that party identification may influence attitudes before formation of ideological identity, it does present an analysis prediction the latter with the former in three different stages. Recall the discussion of three different models of ideological identity. There are two pieces of evidence presented that make this case. First is the ability of partisan identity alone to explain ideological identity. In model 1, a bivariate model has an r-squared of just 0.32. Alone, this offers compelling evidence that the two are rather closely — though imperfectly — related. More importantly, the increase in r-squared from the base regression to one that includes policy preferences (0.41) and social affect (0.50) suggest that partisan party identification is not everything it has been talked up to be. Second, at each iteration in the regression analysis, the coefficient for party identification fell

substantially: from 0.4 to 0.26 to 0.13.

Partisan identity might be important in the modern belief system, to say the least, but it is by no means the only — or even the most — important thing. Even as membership with a political party has grown more important over time, it has been eclipsed always by one variable: affect toward the two labels themselves.

6.3 Ideology, policy preferences, and social affect have grown closer over time

One of the more concerning findings presented in this thesis is the increasingly intertwined nature of our policy preferences, attachments toward social groups, and self-placement on the ideological spectrum. Recall the excerpt from the National Review’s Jonah Goldberg above. Though I present evidence that suggests the magnitude of his asserted correlation between partisanship and ideology is wrong, what is certainly clear is that this relationship has grown stronger over time. In fact, the variance in the latter explained by former has almost doubled over the past two decades. An increase, to be sure.

I discussed a few reasons for the increased intertwining of the three in Chapter 4 of this thesis. The predominantly theorized cause is, partisan sorting and rise of “conservative” being equated with “republican,” “liberal” becoming synonymous with “democrat” — Goldberg shows this quite well. As the political parties have adopted policy preferences that epitomize their group, and membership in the group has become more normatively valuable at the hands of affective polarization (Webster and Abramowitz, 2017), the members have sorted themselves along those lines. To be a true Republican, you must be a true conservative as well — or so the argument goes. This is why terms like “RINO” (Republican In Name Only) have come to be present among conservative circles online.

There are broader implications for the increasingly intertwined dependent and independent variables

over time. Since we know that the predictiveness of affect toward ideology on ideological identity has increased in significance over time, and we know that party identification continues to pressure voters to sort their policy preferences, we could be slowly entering a political environment in which our group membership *and policy preferences* are dependent upon our affective evaluation of certain groups. Though my research does not speak explicitly to the ability of social affect to influence issue attitudes — and future research absolutely should — the implications of these findings are certainly nothing to scoff at.

6.4 A mild causal role of ideological identity

Through a survey experiment, I uncovered the suggestions of a mild causal relationship running from ideological identification to policy preferences. Though the effects of my manipulation washed out in aggregate, something interesting emerged based on whether participants believed the manipulation.

Respondents primed with (what we can only assume is) their own ideological identity became slightly more ideological in their policy preferences, with liberals moving about 0.03 (on a scale running from 0 to 1) points to the left. To be sure, these treatment effects are rather small; even if they are valid externally, this does not do so much as to represent a movement from one attitude on a typical 7-point response scale.

However, I found strong and statistically significant effects of *mis-priming* ideological identity on policy preferences, with both ideological categories moving about 0.16 — or more than full response category on a typical 7-point scale — in the opposite direction than expected.

Most important in these results is the discrepancy between the treatment effects for those categorized correctly and incorrectly, with the latter being 8x larger. It is as though respondents who were primed with their own identity accepted it, said “yeah, that’s right,” and moved on. Respondents who faced

a survey telling them that they were conservatives/liberals when they clearly did not identify as such, however, appeared to spin their wheel of policy preferences 180 degrees in the other direction in an apparent attempt to prove their real ideology. Given what we know about the powerful *negative* affect driving group membership in American politics, the direction of the difference might not be too surprising to some. However, the magnitude of the effect deserves more attention. Since I've also uncovered that the relationship between these variables has strengthened over time, I suspect this question will only become more important as time goes on.

These results suggests that ideological identity might have a mild influence on voters' policy preferences, but to be sure, much more work is needed to assign a sound verdict either way.

6.5 Discussion

This thesis has uncovered that Americans are categorizing their ideological selves *more* based on affect toward the labels of liberals and conservatism than because of any other factor, issue-attitude or otherwise. This relationship has grown stronger over time, making Americans today more identity-driven than those in the 1990s. As this relationship continues to strengthen, American politics will likely continue to become dominated by identity politics, though on a political (in addition to, not instead of, a racial, economic or otherwise) dimension. Identity politics are a regular thing in the American public, and political scientists would be doing a service to politics to learn more about this trend before it runs too rampant. They should do so, notably, with the understanding that both social identity and policy preferences have a role to play in the modern American belief system... at least for now.

The danger herein could be even worse than my research can speak to. Lilliana Mason in 2018 finds that ideological thinking can drive heightened levels of affective polarization even among voters with higher levels issue constraint (Mason and Wronski, 2018). The politically low-knowledge public is not

the only population susceptible to the polarized ideological categorization, in summary. The entirety of American democracy is at stake.

However, there is good news; identity politics does not rule everything. Even in this time of heightened partisan polarization and social affect, policy preferences still have some impact on the way we view the world. One could expect that these results hold true for the political decisions we make as well: who we vote for, which causes we advocate for, etc. We're not entirely — though we are predominantly — being of social membership. The rational voter is still somewhat intact.

Even still, heightened levels of social affect do not have to be damaging. As the penumbras of the “party membership is a heuristic” research implies, membership with a political party (which might not operate too differently than membership with an ideological group, based on the survey experiment in this paper) are only normatively (democratically, institutionally) damaging if the party whose heuristic they're using is damaging. If the outgroup nature of identity-based ideology drives association with positive influences and groups that provide good representation, appropriate services, etc., then this could be helpful, not hurtful, for democracy. In short, identity politics could pay off — though one would be foolish not to acknowledge the naively optimistic nature of this assessment. If history has been any guide, this will only get worse before it gets better — if it gets better.

Americans are driven both by issues and identity, in sum. Where will the research take this debate next?

Appendix A

Survey Questionnaire

This appendix presents the questionnaire used in the survey experiment discussed in chapter 5 of this thesis.

Q1: There has been some discussion about abortion during recent years. Which one of the opinions on this page best agrees with your view, or haven't you thought much about it?

- By law, abortion should never be permitted.
- The law should permit abortion only in case of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger.
- The law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, incest, or danger to the woman's life, but only after the need for the abortion has been clearly established.
- By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice.
- Don't Know/ Other

Q2: Some people think we need much tougher government regulations on business in order to protect the environment. (Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1.) Other think that current regulations to protect the environment are already too much of a burden on business. (Suppose these

people are at the other end of the scale, at point 7.) And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?

- 1 The government should have tough regulations on business to protect the environment
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 Current regulations are already too much of a burden on business
- I haven't thought much about it

Q3: Do you think the number of immigrants from foreign countries who are permitted to come to the United States to live should be increased a lot, increased a little, left the same as it is now, decreased a little, or decreased a lot — or haven't you thought much about it?

- Increased a lot
- Increased a little
- Left the same as it is now
- Decreased a little
- Decreased a lot
- I haven't thought much about it

Q4: Some people think the government should provide fewer services in general, including in areas such as health and education in order to reduce spending. Other people feel it is important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending. What is your opinion on this, or haven't you thought much about it?

- The government should provide many fewer services and reduce spending a great deal
- The government should provide a moderate amount fewer services and reduce spending a moderate amount
- The government should provide slightly fewer services and reduce spending a small amount
- Government services and federal spending should remain at current levels
- The government should provide slightly more services and increase spending a small amount
- The government should provide a moderate amount more services and increase spending a moderate amount
- The government should provide many more services and increase spending a great deal
- I haven't thought much about it

Q5: There is much concern about the rapid rise in medical and hospital costs. Some people feel that medical expenses should be paid by individuals, and through private insurance like Blue Cross or other company paid plans. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others feel there should be a government insurance plan which would cover all medical and hospital expenses for everyone. Suppose these people are at the other end of the scale, at point 7. And of course, some people have opinions somewhere in between at points 2,3,4,5 or 6.)

Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?

- 1 Insurance should be paid by private individuals, and through private insurance and company paid plans
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 There should be a government insurance plan which would cover all medical and hospital

expenses

- I haven't thought much about it

Q6: Based on your responses to the above questions, you classify as 75% more (liberal/conservative) than the rest of Americans.

7: For a long time, the Federal Government has spent money to provide sustenance (food) programs to poorer Americans. Some people believe the government should continue funding these programs, while others believe the food stamps should be eliminated. What is your preference on federal spending on food stamps, or haven't you thought much about it?

- Spending on food stamps should be increased a great deal more
- Spending should be increased a moderate amount
- Spending should be increased a little more
- No change
- Spending should be decreased a little
- Spending should be decreased a moderate amount
- Spending on food stamps should be eliminated

Q8: For a while now there has been a lot of debate over the role of the government in providing grants to Americans seeking a college education. Some people believe that the government should leave college funding up to families. Suppose that these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others believe that the government should spend enough on grants to provide a 2-year college education for every American, free of charge. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. Where do you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about it?

- 1 Funding for college should be left up to families
- 2
- 3

- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 The government should provide funding enough to send each American to 2-year community colleges free of charge
- I haven't thought much about it

Q9: Some people believe that the federal government should spend as little as possible for defense. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others feel that defense spending should take up a great deal of the government's budget. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

- 1 The federal government should spend as little as possible for defense
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 The defense budget should robust, taking up as much as the federal government's budget as possible
- I haven't thought much about it

Q10: Recently there has been a lot of talk about the government's role in providing financial assistance to poor people. Some Americans believe that the Federal Government should not be providing said assistance. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others believe a great deal of funding for these programs is good for the country. These people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6. Where

would you place yourself on this scale?

- 1 The federal government should not be providing financial assistance to poor people
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 The federal government should be providing a great deal of assistance to poor people
- I haven't thought much about it

Q11: Do you think the federal government should make it more difficult for people to buy a gun than it is now, make it easier for people to buy a gun, or keep these rules about the same as they are now?

- The federal government should make it more difficult for people to buy a gun
- The federal government should make it less difficult for people to buy a gun
- The federal government should keep the rules about the same

Appendix B

Correlations Between Questions

This appendix presents the correlations between questions from the pooled 1992-2012 American National Election Study surveys, as discussed in chapters 3 and 6 of this thesis. The survey items used from the ANES cumulative file are available at http://www.electionstudies.org/studypages/download/datacenter_all_NoData.php. The used variables are detailed below:

- Year: VCF0004
- Weight: VCF0009z
- Party identification: VCF0301
- Ideology: VCF0803
- Political knowledge: VCF0729
- Health insurance policy: VCF0806
- Abortion policy: VCF0837
- Spending on general government services: VCF0839
- Defense spending: VCF0843
- Spending on aid to the poor: VCF0886

- Environmental protection policy: VCF9047
- Immigration policy: VCF0879
- Spending on public schools: VCF0890
- Feeling thermometer, blacks: VCF0206
- Feeling thermometer, unions: VCF0210
- Feeling thermometer, business: VCF0209
- Feeling thermometer, liberals: VCF0211
- Feeling thermometer, conservatives: VCF0212
- Feeling thermometer, Democrats: VCF0218
- Feeling thermometer, Republicans: VCF0224

FT: Unions	-0.1	-0.33	-0.11	-0.3	-0.28	-0.29	-0.06	-0.1	-0.4	-0.17	-0.3	-0.39	-0.42	0.24	0.01	
FT: Big Business	0.13	0.07	0.19	0.1	0.18	0.25	0.01	-0.03	0.19	0.06	0.11	0.29	0.25	0.16		0.01
FT: Blacks	0	-0.19	-0.01	-0.12	-0.1	-0.11	-0.14	-0.01	-0.2	-0.11	-0.11	-0.14	-0.21		0.16	0.24
FT: Net Republican	0.26	0.38	0.28	0.36	0.43	0.56	0.13	0.04	0.81	0.21	0.37	0.64		-0.21	0.25	-0.42
FT: Net Conservative	0.33	0.33	0.3	0.37	0.41	0.64	0.16	0.03	0.58	0.2	0.36		0.64	-0.14	0.29	-0.39
Spendign on General Gov. Services	0.13	0.34	0.11	0.31	0.32	0.3	0.05	0.08	0.34	0.14		0.36	0.37	-0.11	0.11	-0.3
Public School Funding	0.09	0.24	0.04	0.23	0.16	0.18	0.05	0.06	0.21		0.14	0.2	0.21	-0.11	0.06	-0.17
Party ID	0.23	0.37	0.24	0.33	0.41	0.55	0.1	0.05		0.21	0.34	0.58	0.81	-0.2	0.19	-0.4
Political Knowledge	-0.05	0.14	-0.03	0.1	0.08	0.03	-0.06		0.05	0.06	0.08	0.03	0.04	-0.01	-0.03	-0.1
Decrease Immigration	0.05	0.09	0.11	0.07	0.09	0.13		-0.06	0.1	0.05	0.05	0.16	0.13	-0.14	0.01	-0.06
Ideological Self-Identification	0.32	0.29	0.28	0.32	0.38		0.13	0.03	0.55	0.18	0.3	0.64	0.56	-0.11	0.25	-0.29
Health Care	0.16	0.35	0.23	0.3		0.38	0.09	0.08	0.41	0.16	0.32	0.41	0.43	-0.1	0.18	-0.28
Environmental Protections	0.14	0.38	0.12		0.3	0.32	0.07	0.1	0.33	0.23	0.31	0.37	0.36	-0.12	0.1	-0.3
Defense	0.18	0.11		0.12	0.23	0.28	0.11	-0.03	0.24	0.04	0.11	0.3	0.28	-0.01	0.19	-0.11
Aid to the Poor	0.06		0.11	0.38	0.35	0.29	0.09	0.14	0.37	0.24	0.34	0.33	0.38	-0.19	0.07	-0.33
Abortion		0.06	0.18	0.14	0.16	0.32	0.05	-0.05	0.23	0.09	0.13	0.33	0.26	0	0.13	-0.1
	Abortion															
	Aid to the Poor															
	Defense															
	Environmental Protections															
	Health Care															
	Ideological Self-Identification															
	Decrease Immigration															
	Political Knowledge															
	Party ID															
	Public School Funding															
	Spendign on General Gov. Services															
	FT: Net Conservative															
	FT: Net Republican															
	FT: Blacks															
	FT: Big Business															
	FT: Unions															

Figure B.1: The correlation between questions used from the 1992-2012 ANES surveys

Bibliography

Achen, C. H. and Bartels, L. M. (2016). *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton University Press.

Aristotle (1908). *Aristotle's Politics*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Azur, M. J., Stuart, E. A., Frangakis, C., and Leaf, P. J. (2011). Multiple Imputation by Chained Equations: What is it and how does it work? *International journal of methods in psychiatric research*, 20(1):40–49.

Baldassarri, D. and Gelman, A. (2008). Partisans without Constraint: Political Polarization and Trends in American Public Opinion. *American Journal of Sociology*, 114(2):408–446.

Bartels, L. M. (2006). What's the Matter With What's the Matter With Kansas? *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 1:201–226.

Benjamin, D. J., Choi, J. J., and Strickland, A. J. (2010). Social Identity and Preferences. *American Economic Review*, 100(4):1913–1928.

Campbell, A. and Center, U. o. M. S. R. (1960). *The American Voter*. University of Chicago Press.

Carmines, E. G. and Stimson, J. A. (1980). The Two Faces of Issue Voting. *American Political Science Review*, 74(1):78–91.

- Cohen, G. L. (2003). Party over policy: The dominating impact of group influence on political beliefs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85(5):808–822.
- Conover, P. and Feldman, S. (1981). The Origin and Meaning of Liberal/Conservative Self-Identifications.
- Converse, P. E. (1964). The nature of belief systems in mass publics. 5.
- Delli-Carpini, M. X. and Keeter, S. (1996). *What Americans Know about Politics and why it Matters*. Yale University Press.
- Destutt de Tracy, A. L. C. (1803). *Projet d'éléments d'idéologie à l'usage des écoles centrales de la République Française*. Paris: P. Didot [etc.].
- Ellis, C. and Stimson, J. A. (2012). *Ideology in America*. Cambridge University Press.
- Geertz, C. (1973). The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays. page 478.
- Greene, S. (2004). Social Identity Theory and Party Identification. *Social Science Quarterly*, 85(1):136–153.
- Grossmann, M. and Hopkins, D. A. (2016). *Asymmetric Politics: Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats*. Oxford University Press.
- Jost, J. T., Federico, C. M., and Napier, J. L. (2009). Political Ideology: Its Structure, Functions, and Elective Affinities. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60(1):307–337.
- Kinder, D. R. and Kalmoe, N. P. (2017). *Neither Liberal nor Conservative: Ideological Innocence in the American Public*. University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, S. (2011). *Ten Political Ideas that Have Shaped the Modern World*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Levendusky, M. (2009). *The Partisan Sort: How Liberals Became Democrats and Conservatives Became Republicans*. University of Chicago Press.

- Lewis-Beck, M. S., Norpoth, H., Jacoby, W., and Weisberg, H. (2008). *The American Voter Revisited*. University of Michigan Press.
- Mason, L. (2013). The Rise of Uncivil Agreement: Issue Versus Behavioral Polarization in the American Electorate. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(1):140–159.
- Mason, L. (2018). Ideologues Without Issues: the Polarizing Consequences of Ideological Identities. *Public Opinion Quarterly*.
- Mason, L. and Wronski, J. (2018). One Tribe to Bind Them All: How Our Social Group Attachments Strengthen Partisanship. *Political Psychology*, 39(S1):257–277.
- Noel, H. (2013). *Political Ideologies and Political Parties in America*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pew Research Center, . L. S. (2017). Political Typology Reveals Deep Fissures on the Right and Left.
- Poole, K. T. and Rosenthal, H. (1985). A Spatial Model for Legislative Roll Call Analysis. *American Journal of Political Science*, 29(2):357–384.
- Popkin, S. (1994). *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*. Political science. University of Chicago Press.
- Schaffner, B. F. and Streb, M. J. (2002). The partisan heuristic in low-information elections*. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 66(4):559–581.
- Smerconish, M. (2018). Is tribalism ruining america?
- Sniderman, P. M., Brody, R. A., and Tetlock, P. E. (1991). *Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Webster, S. W. and Abramowitz, A. I. (2017). The ideological foundations of affective polarization in the u.s. electorate. *American Politics Research*, 45(4):621–647.
- Zaller, J. (1992). *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge University Press.