Uses & Abuses of Ideology in Political Psychology

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Abstract

Ideology is a central construct in political psychology, and researchers claim large majorities of the public are ideological, but most fail to grapple with evidence of ideological innocence in most citizens. Here, I show these ideological limits with several popular measures—self-identification, core political values (egalitarian & traditional), and policy indices—in representative U.S. surveys across five decades (*N*~13k-37k), including panel data for evaluating stability. In stratified tests, only the most knowledgeable 20-30% of citizens carry substantive, coherent, stable, and potent ideological orientations. In other words, political sophistication is necessary for predispositions to actualize as ideology. Moreover, ideology's power is confounded—largely due to partisan identity instead, and I show that ubiquitous convenience samples make trouble for ideology generalizations. Finally, I propose analytic best practices to avoid inferential errors. Taken together, what first appears to be strong and broad ideology is actually ideological innocence for most people, and real ideology for a few.

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INTRODUCTION

Ideology is a central construct in political psychology—recently 'resurgent' in scholarship and political life (e.g. Jost 2006; Jost et al. 2008). By those lights, ideological beliefs are held widely throughout the public, and ideology exerts substantial power on most people's political judgments and daily lives—a psychological fit with a constellation of personality traits, cognitive processes, values, morals, motives, moods, emotions, and physiology (e.g. Carney et al. 2008; Duckitt & Sibley 2010; Graham et al. 2009; Hibbing et al. 2014; Inbar et al. 2008; Jost 2017; Jost et al. 2003; Jost et al. 2004; Jost et al. 2009; Napier & Jost 2008; Oxley et al. 2008; Skitka & Tetlock 1993). This newer literature subsumes prior studies on core political values like egalitarianism and traditionalism—work that advances similar structuring arguments despite independent, ideology-critical origins (e.g. Feldman 1988; Feldman 2003; Goren 2001; Goren 2012; Markus 2001; Schwartz et al. 2010).

In contrast, most public opinion scholars find ideology's reach is limited. Several metrics across decades consistently show about 20-30% of people qualify as ideologues: 1) less than a fifth of citizens explain their views with reference to abstract political principles; 2) only a fifth understands meaningful distinctions between liberalism and conservatism; 3) few people link policy views coherently; and 4) a minority holds stable views on any given policy (e.g. Converse 1964; Converse 2000; Converse & Pierce 1986; Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996; Ellis & Stimson 2012; Freeder et al. 2018; Kam 2005; Kinder 1998; Kinder & Kalmoe 2017; Lane 1962; Sniderman & Stiglitz 2012; Zaller 1992). Even Jost's (2006) claim of 80% loyal ideological voting only covers 28% of voters. Only a knowledgeable and attentive fraction of citizens is ideological by any reasonable definition. A handful of political psychologists have recognized the decisive role of knowledge and account for it in their work (e.g. Brewer 2003; Carrus et al. 2018; Federico et al. 2011; Federico & Goren 2008; Federico & Malka 2018; Goren 2012; Johnston et al. 2017). But, broadly speaking, political psychology has not grappled seriously with the ideological vacuum in most of the public.

The key question, then, is not *whether* political ideology carries meaningful psychological distinctions, but *for whom* and *to what extent*? The dispute centers on research design and empirical interpretation, not differing definitions of ideology, which makes resolution possible. Here, I show how conventional analysis subtly overstates mass ideological influence, and I present new evidence that ideology is powerful only for the well-informed few. I also propose a set of best practices for ideological analysis so scholars can avoid the inferential errors made by ideology maximalists.

To be clear, the modest correlations found between ideology, psychological traits, and lifestyle measures are useful contributions, so long as ideology is the root cause. In fact, knowledge stratification shows that overall correlations *understate* the strength of relationships among sophisticated folks. The trouble is in the claims of broad ideology public.

I begin by summarizing and critiquing maximal claims, including a short explanation of why anything like meaningful, actualized ideology is unreachable for most people. Then, in the main empirical section, I show these limits with several popular ideological constructs—self-identification, egalitarian and traditional values, and policy indices—in representative U.S. surveys across four decades, including panel data for evaluating construct stability. With stratified tests, I find that only the most knowledgeable citizens carry substantive, coherent, stable and potent ideological orientations. Participant pools with above-average levels of political sophistication also make trouble for ideology generalizations. Finally, much of ideology's claimed power is attributable to partisanship as a social identity instead. I end by reflecting on well-meaning but futile efforts to reanimate the political corpse of what Abelson called "psychology's rational man."

IDEOLOGY MAXIMALISM & ITS CRITICS

As the quintessential maximalist, Jost (2006) says, "ideology is everywhere" these days (p. 652), in the public, among politicians, and in the media.[2] Whole societies are at ideological odds. I focus on public opinion here. Jost defines ideology as "an interrelated set of moral and political attitudes that possesses cognitive, affective, and motivational components," which "explain why people do what they do; it organizes their values and beliefs and leads to political behavior" (p. 653). So far so good: broadly structured, interrelated orientations that exert causal force in politics are reasonable criteria. Overall, he concludes, "although ordinary people by no means pass the strictest tests imaginable for ideological sophistication, *most of them* do think, feel, and behave in ideologically meaningful and interpretable terms" (p. 667, emphasis added).

Jost says his critics misrepresent his arguments, and so I aim to reflect faithfully our core dispute over the *proportion* of ideological citizens. Jost has never specified a percentage, though he clearly indicates it is a substantial majority. To him, ideological self-placement by two-thirds to three-quarters of the public, joined by its correlations with political and psychological constructs, is clear evidence that "[a] large majority of the American public knows whether they usually prefer liberal or conservative ideas." When dissenting work argues that most people are not ideological—meaning a minority resemble ideologues—Jost elides elite and mass distinctions, cherry-picks critical evidence, and ignores the modifier "most" to counter straw-man arguments of *no* ideology at all, which he bizarrely characterizes as "assumptions" despite the empirical support (e.g. Jost 2017).

To put it plainly, my claim is that well under half the public qualifies as ideologues. More particularly, and with generous classification, I'd say roughly 20-30% fit the bill in any final accounting. And even those "ideologues" pale when compared to political elites in adhering to principle, structuring attitudes, and holding durable views (e.g. Converse 1964; Converse 2000;

[2] Jost (2006) says politics are more ideological today, and so we should expect more mass ideology than in Converse's (1964) mid-century public. One sentence later, Jost says the 1950s had plenty ideological divisions. Since most of the public wasn't ideological in *either* era, Jost's contextual contradictions amount to little.

Converse & Pierce 1986). Jost's argument starts from a disadvantage on his favorite measure, ideological identification: half of the public declines to claim liberalism or conservatism (Kinder & Kalmoe 2017). It's possible, of course, that some other metric is kinder to ideological maximalism, without requiring ideological self-awareness. But in the end, it turns out to be the *most* flattering result when taken on its face—itself a tenuous proposition among many ideological identifiers.

Ideology & Political Choice

Jost (2006) regards lopsided county-level partisan votes, individual-level party loyalty, partisan homophily, and partisan cable news viewership as signs of an ideologically polarized public. That sounds like partisanship, not ideology, so Jost must assume party preferences are ideological at root, despite decades of research showing ideology and policy views have small *effects* on partisanship and votes for most people, while partisanship *causes* those views (e.g. Achen & Bartels 2017; Campbell et al. 1960; Ellis & Stimson 2012; Jennings et al. 2009; Kinder & Kalmoe 2017; Zaller 1992). The distinction matters: as we'll see, partisanship is broad and strong; ideology isn't.

Regarding ideological self-identification, Jost acknowledges that a quarter to a third of the public says they can't locate themselves on a liberal-moderate-conservative scale. Those who do, he says "do so with a reasonable (but not perfect) degree of accuracy, stability, and coherence." (p. 656). Notably, that notion conflicts with evidence that the average policy position is liberal for most "conservative" identifiers (Stimson 2004).[3] Relationships between ideological identification and issue preferences tend to be weak overall and subject to alternative causes (Kinder & Kalmoe 2017).

What about vote choice? Implausibly, Jost reports a .90 correlation relating ideology ID and U.S. presidential votes. That's not replicable, as far as I can tell—I find .49 in the same data—and I've *never* seen anything predict votes at .90—not with candidate evaluations, partisanship, or pre-

[3] Jost et al. (2009) say the symbolic/operational disconnect, balanced toward liberal policies, is explained by Jost et al.'s (2004) theory of system justification, even as they describe support for societal *change* as essentially liberal.

election vote intention.[4] Nonetheless, Jost's Table 1 of vote-ideology consistency looks about right, showing 72-83% alignment among voters in the four polar ideological categories of the seven-point scale, with a baseline of 50% match by chance. Correlative strength is not evidence of breadth in the public, however: what Jost doesn't mention is that those four categories account for only 28% of voters. That indicates a small minority of voters who a hold polar views and vote accordingly.

Despite all that, Jost says he can't think of a more effective survey question in all social and behavioral science predicting vote choice. I vote for partisan ID, the most important force in mass politics, well documented for half a century (e.g. Campbell et al. 1960). Partisanship correlates with presidential vote choice at .68 in comparable data. Voters in the four most polar partisan categories are 71-97% loyal, and they constitute 62% of voters. Put differently, partisan ID explains nearly twice the variance in voting *without* dropping the least knowledgeable third of the sample—higher loyalty rates that apply to more than twice as many voters. And that's without stratifying by knowledge, which multiplies party-ideology gaps for most people (Kinder & Kalmoe 2017).[5]

Core Political Values

Research on core political values (CPV) developed before psychology's renewed attention to ideology; ideology maximalists subsume egalitarianism and traditionalism values as the two core components of political ideology (e.g. Jost et al. 2003). CPV scholarship recognizes ideological limits in mass politics and tries to sidestep ideology *per se* with values performing similar feats of simplification and organizational strength within each domain (e.g. Feldman 1988; Feldman 2003; Feldman & Zaller 1992; Goren 2001; Goren 2004; Goren 2005; Goren 2012; Markus 2001; Schwartz et al. 2010). Ideology maximalists argue that egalitarianism and social traditionalism

[4] Even a model of likes/dislikes regarding the presidential candidates—nearly tautological—explains 51% of the variance, compared to Jost's 85% claim. Likewise, reported past presidential vote correlates and current partisanship's correlate with current voting near .70—about 49% shared variance for each. Intended vote choice the month or so before the election correlates with post-election vote report at .88.

[5] In the decade since Jost's article, ideology-vote correlations grew to .60 and party-vote correlations grew to .79, due to higher party loyalty and to the increasing correspondence between party and ideology identifications. Partisans are slowly learning what labels they're supposed to use with their partisanship, as party remains operative (Kinder & Kalmoe 2017).

constrain views even more powerfully than liberal/conservative concepts (Carney et al. 2008; Jost 2006; Jost et al. 2003; Jost et al. 2008).

Core political values are functionally similar to ideology, just one step below in a principled hierarchy: reasoning based on abstract values that produce organized political views within a domain, if not globally. Thus, they carry nearly all the same limits on capacity that ideology does. Kinder (1998) laid bare the conflict between CPV claims and evidence of ideological innocence: "How are citizens who are demonstrably unwilling or incapable of developing ideological points of view somehow quite willing and capable of acquiring and deploying principles?" (p. 812).

CPV scholarship attends more to differences in political knowledge, and they find that knowledge conditions citizens' ability to make connections between values and preferences, and signals whether they are likely to notice when trusted political leaders explain those connections to them (Brewer 2003; Goren 2001; Goren 2012; Kam 2005). However, they say evidence of potency in less knowledgeable people is enough to support broad claims. Despite that formulation, CPV claims still conflict with the observed degree of public indifference to political abstractions and the incoherence, instability, and impotence of most orientations in the absence of knowledge. Ultimately, the evidence below shows CPV fare no better than symbolic or operational ideology.

Ideology, Personality, & Lifestyles

Jost and colleagues' (2003) meta-analyses relate several ideological constructs—ideological self-placement, core political values, policy items and indices—with psychological needs that include epistemic motives (e.g. need for order & certainty), existential motives (e.g. self-esteem & mortality avoidance), and ideological motives (e.g. self-interest, group dominance). They argue political conservatism fulfills psychological needs in response to signals of uncertainty and threat in the environment (see Figure 1). Other studies posit needs as stable individual differences that produce reliable expressions in everyday interactions and lifestyles (Carney et al. 2008; Jost et al. 2008).

Maximalists make much of small to moderate ideology relationships, thus overstating ideology's power. For example, Jost and colleagues (2003) find small correlations between .18 and .27 in six categories and moderate correlations between .32 to .50 in five categories. Jost and colleagues (2008) report similar findings ranging between .09 and .47, with a median of .25.[6] Those aren't nothing, but they're not much either—certainly not distinctive to the extent the authors suggest. Bear in mind that a .30 correlation explains less than 10% of the variance in an outcome, and a .20 correlation explains just 4%. That hardly qualifies as ideologically noticeable in everyday life, which may explain why Carney and colleagues (2008) call these differences "secret."

Ideology & Biopolitics

Behavioral geneticists and others studying biopolitics proceed with similar notions of stable pre-political ideological predispositions, arguing that genes and physiology account for sizable portions of variation in observed orientations (e.g. Alford, Funk, & Hibbing 2005; Hatemi et al. 2014; Martin et al. 1986; Oxley et al. 2008; Smith et al. 2011; Verhulst et al. 2011). However, genetic heritability for indices of ideological attitudes is highly dependent on political sophistication. Heritability of issue-based ideology is nearly zero for the low-knowledge majority (Kalmoe 2018a).

Explaining Ideological Innocence for Most

Converse (1964) conceptualized belief systems as heuristic structures that made understanding politics easier. The trouble, as he and others found, is that only politically knowledgeable citizens know enough to understand and form consistent ideological and value-based beliefs, and to connect those principles to new attitude objects (Converse 1964; Kinder & Kalmoe 2017; Lane 1962). In other words, people need lots political knowledge to process information with ideological efficiency, but the average person knows little about politics, even as a small fraction of citizens know a great deal (Converse 2000). Psychologists have begun to find similar knowledge

[6] Thirty correlations are <.20, 33 are between .20 and .39, and 14 are between .40 and .47.

dependencies for many psychological links to politics (Brewer 2003; Carrus et al. 2018; Federico et al. 2011; Federico & Goren 2008; Federico & Malka 2018; Goren 2012; Johnston et al. 2017). Abelson (1976) summed up the ideological challenge for ordinary people: "Why should he care? Even if he cares, how would he have the wherewithal to carry out such an examination? There are many events in the world so remotely or indirectly caused that rational access to their analysis is difficult and tedious" (p. 59-60).

Even more important, most people do not receive the elite guidance that helps even sophisticated citizens form organized and durable beliefs (e.g. Berinsky 2008; Federico & Malka 2018; Lenz 2012; Zaller 1992). Most lack the ability, motivation, and opportunity to follow politics closely enough to make ideological structure possible (Converse 2000; Lane 1962; Luskin 1990). They must be told directly the network of views to hold, and few pay enough attention to get those messages.

It's easy for scholars to forget the extent of public ignorance, because most of our acquaintances are extraordinarily knowledgeable about politics. Here are a few examples of how most of the public does not know party positions on hotly debated policies (Freeder et al. 2018). With a benchmark of 50% for guessing, only 53% of the public in 2012 saw Republicans favoring small government, 58% said Democrats favor less defense spending, 61% linked Republicans to abortion limits, and 67% tied Democrats to higher taxes for the wealthy—the top Democratic issue in the campaign that year (Pew 2012). And information revolutions have only stratified knowledge further, not increased public knowledge overall (Prior 2007; Pew 2007). Whereas partisanship is the most potent *directional* force in mass politics, but political information is the most important *structuring* indicator for mass political attitudes and behaviors (Converse 2000; Zaller 1992).

Some scholars say measurement error accounts for the dismal evidence of ideological structure and stability (e.g. Ansolabehere et al. 2008), but those methods assume their conclusion.

Their evidence is entirely *consistent* with few ideologues, as knowledge stratification, simulations, and statistical theory show (e.g. Converse 2000; Freeder et al. 2018; Kalmoe 2018b). Likewise, Broockman (2016) notes greater item stability *over time* than constraint *between items* at one time, meaning ideological structure is half what it *could* be, even if instability was all measurement error.

Jost says knowledge is unnecessary for ideology, and he falsely claims political scientists take the public ignorance as definitive *prima facie* evidence of no ideology, ignoring other tests—even in the work he cites—that show no ideological *structure* nor *durability* in most people's views.[7]

RECONCILING DIFFERENCES: THEORY & METHODS

Differences between maximal ideology and innocence for most may be theoretically reconcilable with attention to *predispositions* versus *actualization*. Jost and others may be right that most people are moderately inclined toward liberalism or conservatism by psychological needs, but that predisposition depends on individual engagement in politics. Without that, citizens have no way to map their inclinations onto complex and opaque political choices. But even those who are engaged often rely on cues from trusted political leaders—usually partisan—to form their attitudes, and so sophistication serves as a proxy for attention to those guiding elite cues.

Note that ideology evidence has to come from observations of *actualized* ideology, not just predispositions, and so differences in claims can be resolved with careful attention to the empirical record. So what accounts for the seemingly wide *empirical* chasm in evidence about ideology? The most likely culprits that overstate the maximalist case involve inattention to differences by political knowledge, unrepresentative subjects, and alternative explanations. Here, I propose seven evaluative dimensions for testing the breadth of ideology.

[7] Converse (1964) proposed *four* increasingly easy tests for belief systems, finding little evidence for ideology in any. Jost's representation is relevant only for the first two involving stating rationales for preferences and defining ideological terms. Most pointedly, Converse (1964; 2000) finds no over-time stability in issue attitudes and ideological orientations except among the most sophisticated individuals. That rules out the possibility of even the most idiosyncratic belief systems held stably. Liberal-conservative constraint between attitudes at any one time is similarly limited.

1) Middling vs. Polar scale/index scores: Claims made about ideological power at particular scores must be weighed against the proportion of subjects who occupy that space, as noted in the Jost (2006) voting example. But outlying observations also wield disproportionate analytical leverage in relational models. If knowledgeable respondents are more likely to hold outlying scores, then overall sophisticated individuals probably inflate correlation strength proportionately.

2) Reliability of multi-item ideology constructs: If ideology components are potent for most people, then those should be coherent, even for the many folks without much political knowledge. When an ideology measure is reliable for some, lack of coherence shows a lack of ideology.

3) Construct stability over time: Stability is an important test for trait constructs, like ideology, which are theorized as enduring. For maximal ideology claims to hold, constructs should be stable even among low-knowledge people. If not, real ideological commitments are held by few.

4) Relationships between related constructs: Jost and colleagues (2003) describe a constellation of interrelated ideological components. If ideology is broadly held, then these links should be strong for all people, including those with low political knowledge. If linkages are mostly strong among the knowledgeable few, then ideology cannot be broadly distributed.

5) Power in predicting presidential votes: Jost (2006) says ideology is the most powerful force he can think of that guides vote choice. How strong is it, among the portion of the public who hold substantive scores? Is it powerful throughout the public, including among the low-knowledge majority? And how does its electoral force stack up against partisanship?

6) Alternative explanations: Most ideology tests are observational, cross-sectional, and bivariate, raising the likelihood that political ideology is not the relevant cause. Partisanship is the likeliest alternative culprit, along with other social identities.

7) Convenience samples: College and adult samples may often have unusually high levels of overall political knowledge compared to the public, and those differences are likely to inflate estimates of ideological relationships.

My primary hypothesis for each is that results will markedly vary by knowledge, with substantially stronger performance among sophisticated citizens. Stratification alone does not adjudicate the dispute with maximal claims, however. In addition, evidence among the low-knowledge majority must tend to show an *absence* of meaningful ideology. Overall, I expect the combination of these tests will show most Americans lack meaningful ideological orientations.

RESEARCH METHODS

Data & Measures

Data come from the American National Election Studies (ANES), a series of nationally representative surveys of age-eligible U.S. adults in all presidential elections and nearly all midterms since 1948. The National Science Foundation-funded data are publicly available (electionstudies.org), and, in recent years include several personality batteries from psychology. The cumulative data file includes all time-series responses from pre-/post-election panels in presidential years and post-election surveys after midterms. Multi-level sampling yielded response rates over fifty percent. I limit my attention to face-to-face and telephone interviews administered by highly trained interviewers, though ANES has begun supplementing its samples with Internet responses in recent years. These data are the gold standard for survey administration, sampling, and measurement quality.

Seven-point partisanship and vote choice are available for nearly the entire series. Seven-point scale measures for ideological identification and several broad policy attitudes on seven-point scales appear from 1972 onward, which I combine in an operational ideology index. Multi-item measures for egalitarianism and moral traditionalism begin in 1984 and 1986, respectively. The ANES also conducted multi-year panel studies re-contacting respondents across elections—useful

for evaluating stability over time and gaining temporal leverage on causality. The 1990-92 and 1992-96 ANES panel alone have all the relevant measures, though other panels produce similar stability results for ideological identification and policy attitudes.

Multiple measures help to reduce measurement error by focusing on a common factor between individual survey items. Most people have inconsistent views, even within policy domains, and their disorganized (or even random) responses produce scores close to the middle. Only people with consistently polarized scores wind up on the outer edges of a scale (e.g. Broockman 2016).

I measure knowledge with validated interviewer five-point ratings of respondents after survey administration (e.g. Zaller 1992). Unlike values and policy indices that reduce measurement error, knowledge is a single indicator, which would reduce contrasts and overstates ideology in low-knowledge categories. Quiz-style questions are a reasonable alternative, but interviewer ratings are the only consistent measure in these surveys across several decades.

RESULTS

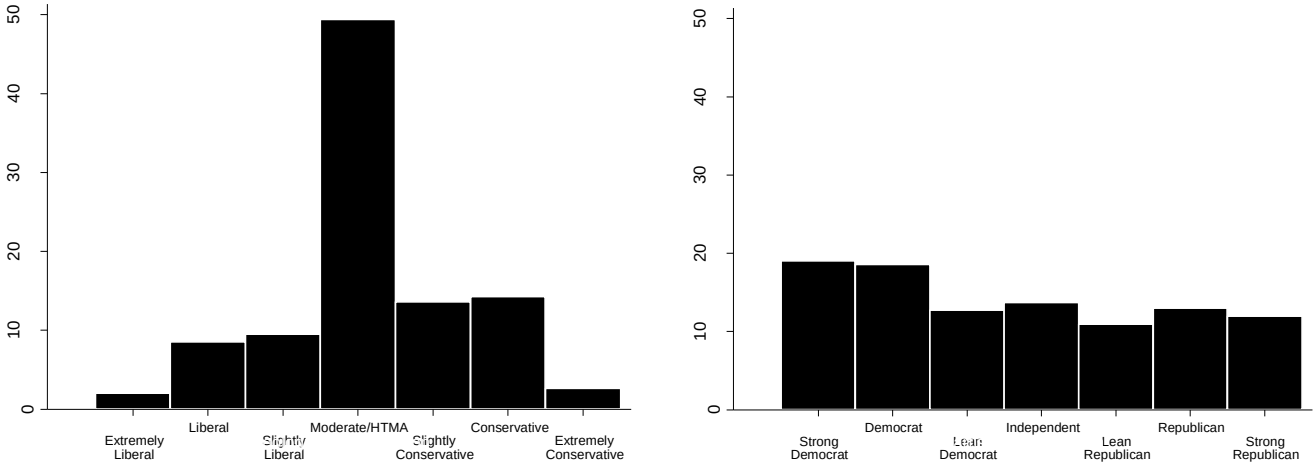
Measurement Attributes: Opinionation & Distribution

On the most popular ideology measure, half of the public declines to align themselves with liberals or conservatives, and they are substantially less knowledgeable than those who do (Kinder & Kalmoe 2017). "Moderates" are indistinct from people who decline to place themselves in terms of knowledge, issue constraint, and issue stability (see Kinder & Kalmoe 2017, Appendix B). Thus, I pool the groups, with about half coming from each category. On policy views, a tenth to a third of the public give "don't know' responses, and knowledge predicts those responses too (Converse 1964; Krosnick & Milburn 1990). I code "don't know' responses as middling on issues.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of ideological identification for all respondents between 1972 and 2016, with partisan identification as a comparison. Plainly, partisan identification is far more prevalent than its ideological cousin, and large portions of partisans occupy the high-leverage poles

of the measure, in contrast to very few for ideology. Those who do choose "conservative" or "liberal" adhere near the middle rather than the endpoints. Notice the balance of ideology, which leans conservative, contrasts with the balance of partisanship, which leans Democratic. The two constructs are distinct theoretically and empirically, individually and in the aggregate.

Figure 1: Ideological Identification and Partisan Identification, 1972-2016



Note: Unweighted responses from the American National Election Studies cumulated file.

Core value and policy items have lower "don't know" rates, so non-response is less of a concern, and party scale non-response is virtually non-existent. So let's move on to the distribution of each construct. Distributions matter, even for standardized variables, because outlying observations have much more statistical leverage than middling ones. And if knowledgeable people predominate on the ends, it is their sophisticated behavior that drives observed relationships.

Outlier Tests

Table 1 presents percentages of respondents with outlying ideological scores for each construct, first for the whole sample, and then for each of the five knowledge categories (proportions given at the top). I report party and ideological identification and policy results from 1984 to the present for comparability with values measures. Here, I employ an absolute measure of

polarization: "Percent in the Polar Half" reports the portion of respondents with scores in the outer substantive half of each scale (i.e. upper and lower quarters).[8] Not an especially high bar.

Table 1: The Breadth of Values, Policy Views, & Identities by Knowledge

		Political Knowledge						
	Full Sample	Lowest 9%	Low 20%	Middle 34%	High 25%	Highest 13%	Info Gain	
Egalitarianism 1984-2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016	*N*=21,579						Highest - Lowest	Highest. ÷ Lowest
Percent in Polar Half	32%	26%	26%	30%	35%	43%	+17%	1.65
Moral Tradition 1986-2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016	*N*=19,306							
Percent in Polar Half	35%	17%	25%	33%	42%	45%	+28%	2.65
Policy Views 1984-2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016	*N*=23,134							
Percent in Polar Half	18%	11%	13%	16%	21%	29%	+18%	2.64
Ideology ID 1984-2004, 2008, 2012, 2016	*N*=25,332							
Percent in Polar Half	27%	11%	16%	24%	34%	44%	+33%	4.00
Partisanship 1984-2004, 2008, 2012, 2016	*N*=24,307							
Percent in Polar Half	61%	41%	55%	63%	66%	67%	+26%	1.63

Nonetheless, the results show small minorities staking out consistent and strong positions on the outer halves of the scales. In the full sample, the results show the public is *not* substantially polarized on any of the ideological measures—not on egalitarian or traditional values, not on issue views, and not on ideological identification. Only a seventh to a third of people with scores in the outer halves of each ideology measure.[9] *Two to three times* as many citizens have polar partisanship. In sum, the minimal amount of ideology observed in Figure 1 for identification extends to similarly to core egalitarian and traditional values, and the lack of operational ideology is even starker.

[8] An alternative measure based on *relative* outlyingness—more than one standard deviation from the mean—shows essentially the same thing (see Online Supplement).

[9] For comparison, polarity estimates in 2016 show 42% on egalitarianism, 35% on traditionalism, 24% on policy views, 35% on ideology ID, and 58% on partisanship in the full sample.

As expected, percentages of polar outliers depend on political knowledge. Only a tenth to a quarter of the lowest third in knowledge have polar ideological views, whereas the highest groups double or even quadruple those levels. Apparently, the "culture war" *isn't* full of easy, consistent, polarized gut orientations. Instead, those commitments are mostly found among informed people (Bartels 2005; Fiorina et al. 2005). By contrast, half the people in the lowest third are polar partisans.

Keep in mind the minimal polarization and stratified distributions for all relational tests. There are twice as many outlying people in the high knowledge group versus the low, and outlying scores have higher analytical leverage. Full-sample estimates may be powerful, but they disproportionately reflect the judgments of the sophisticated few at the poles.

Something Real? Reliability

I test the coherence of multi-item ideological constructs with a Cronbach's alpha reliability scores, and I report the average level of inter-item covariance for a simpler view. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 or above is acceptable. Alphas in the 0.6 range are questionable, the 0.5 range is poor, and below 0.5 is unacceptable. Low alphas indicate measures that don't cohere well. But if they cohere for some people and not others, the problem is a property of those people, and not the measure.

Table 2 presents full sample results for each multi-item construct and results across subcategories of knowledge. Few citizens have ideological orientations that meet the .70 standard for acceptable reliability (bolded). The top 38% have acceptable levels for egalitarianism. Only the upper 13% hit the mark for traditionalism, though the remainder of the upper third comes very close, and results for policy views are about the same. A fair reading would say about 38% of the public holds coherent values and policy views. In other words, core political values do not bootstrap citizens out of ideological innocence—they share the same limitations.[10]

[10] Overall reliabilities are similar but vary somewhat in 2016: egalitarian drops to .60, traditionalism is similar at .64, and policy views rise to .76. For the latter, reliability exceeds .80 for the top two groups (46%), and nearly acceptable at .69 in

Table 2: Reliability for Multiple Measures of Core Political Values & Policy Views

	Full Sample	Lowest 9%	Low 20%	Middle 34%	High 25%	Highest 13%	**Info Gain**	
Egalitarianism							Highest - Lowest	Highest ÷ Lowest
Cronbach's α	.67	.50	.53	***.64***	**.73**	**.79**	+.29	1.58
Avg. inter-item covariance	.10	.05	.06	.09	.13	.17	+.12	3.40
Moral Traditionalism								
Cronbach's α	.62	.35	.47	.59	***.68***	**.73**	+.38	2.09
Avg. inter-item covariance	.11	.04	.06	.10	.14	.18	+.13	4.25
Policy Views								
Cronbach's α	.64	.38	.46	.58	***.69***	**.80**	+.42	2.11
Avg. inter-item covariance	.08	.03	.04	.06	.09	.14	+.11	4.67

Note: Acceptable alphas (bold), questionable alphas (bold-italic).

The story is generally the same for inter-item covariance, though differences by knowledge are even starker. Relationships between items are generally tiny except for the most knowledgeable respondents. Covariance is three or more times strong in the top group than the bottom, and about twice as strong as the middle group. In sum, values and policy views are incoherent for most people.

Something Real? Stability

Trait constructs must be stable over time for construct validity. As with coherence, low stability generally could be a measurement problem. However, high stability for some points the finger at those groups with low stability, not the measure. Note that stability scores disproportionately reflect consistency among those polar few. Those who choose the middle or choose incoherently across multiple items will appear as stable as a committed ideologue.

Table 3 presents two-year squared stability correlations for the 1990-92 ANES panel, followed by four-year squared correlations for the 1992-96 ANES panel. Because of small sample sizes, I merge the two lowest knowledge categories. There is no set threshold for judging stability

the middle group (34%). That indicates broader coherence for policy in 2016. However, egalitarianism doesn't reach acceptable levels for any knowledge group, and traditionalism only gets there for the top knowledge group (21%).

like there was for coherence, but the results look similar. Full-sample stability is low for all four ideological constructs, especially compared to partisanship, which is roughly twice as durable.

Policy views are equal or more stable than values and ID, which makes it harder to argue that those constructs *cause* policy attitudes (see Feldman 2003).[11] It fits McCann's (1997) evidence that core political values shift in response to campaigns and voter preferences, and with Goren's (2005) finding that partisanship shapes values over time, but values don't shape partisanship. Both indicate substantial opinion leadership rather than value-based judgments.

Table 3: The Stability of Core Political Values, Policy Views, & Identifications (Squared Correl.)

	1990-1992 ANES						
	Full Sample	Lowest 18%	Middle 38%	High 30%	Highest 14%	Info Gain	
	N~625					Highest-Lowest	Highest ÷ Lowest
Egalitarianism	.24	.14	.14	.32	.38	+.24	2.71
Moral Tradition	.34	.13	.26	.40	.55	+.42	4.23
Policy Views (*N*~1,359)	.32	.13	.28	.40	.51	+.38	3.92
Ideology ID (*N*~1,359)	.29	.05	.20	.33	.60	+.55	12.00
Partisanship (*N*=1,334)	.61	.44	.59	.66	.73	+.29	1.66
	1992-1996 ANES						
	Full Sample	Lowest 20%	Middle 35%	High 31%	Highest 14%	**Info Gain**	
	N~585					Highest-Lowest	Highest ÷ Lowest
Egalitarianism	.31	.18	.28	.41	.30	+.12	1.67
Moral Tradition	.37	.16	.42	.38	.37	+.21	2.31
Policy Views	.42	.26	.39	.38	.62	+.36	2.38
Ideology ID	.37	.03	.26	.48	.71	+.68	23.67
Partisanship	.59	.49	.58	.66	.58	+.09	1.18

Once again, knowledge is hugely discriminating. Values and policy stability are 2 to 4 times more stable in the highest group versus low in both panels. Ideological identification varies even more: 12 to 24 times due to near-zero stability in the bottom 18%. If we toss the bottom category, the top group still has ideology ID three times more stable than the middle group. Only partisanship

[11] Issue *items* in 1992-96 ANES—including these but adding many more to match Ansolabehere et al. (2008)—correlate around .40 over time, and egalitarianism item correlations range from .26 to .47 with a median of .39 (Kalmoe 2018b).

is highly stable throughout the public at all knowledge levels.[12] Kinder and Kalmoe (2017) stretch these tests out with data over decades and find the same thing: ideological stability only comes with substantial knowledge; partisanship is stable for everyone.

Relating Ideological Constructs

Links between ideological constructs primarily reflect broader partisan organization of political contestation, according to Feldman (2003), Converse (1964), and others, whereas Jost and colleagues (2003) describe bottom-up links between core ideological components emerge predominantly from psychological needs. The top-down version requires attention to political discourse (proxied by knowledge), whereas the bottom-up version does not. Linkages moderated substantially by knowledge would provide more top-down support. Put differently, if most people use ideological constructs in concert to guide their political and lifestyle choices, then those components should correlate to a similar degree across levels of sophistication.

Table 4: Relating Ideological Constructs & Partisanship (Correl.)

	Full Sample	Lowest 9%	Low 20%	Middle 34%	High 25%	Highest 13%	Info Gain	
Egalitarianism							Highest - Lowest	Highest ÷ Lowest
Moral Tradition (rev.)	.28	.04	.11	.23	***.32***	***.45***	+.41	11.25
Policy Views	***.44***	.27	.29	***.40***	**.51**	**.59**	+.32	2.14
Ideology ID (rev.)	***.35***	.06	.11	.27	***.42***	**.55**	+.49	9.17
Partisanship (rev.)	***.35***	.12	.17	.29	***.42***	**.52**	+.41	4.73
Moral Tradition								
Policy Views (rev.)	.29	.03	.13	.22	***.31***	***.49***	+.46	16.33
Ideology ID	***.40***	.08	.18	***.32***	***.46***	**.59**	+.51	7.38
Partisanship	.27	.03	.08	.21	***.32***	***.48***	+.45	16.00
Policy Views								
Ideology ID (rev.)	***.39***	.05	.18	.29	***.47***	**.64**	+.59	12.80
Partisanship (rev.)	***.44***	.12	.22	***.37***	**.50**	**.62**	+.50	5.17
Ideology ID								
Partisanship	***.44***	.06	.17	***.35***	**.54**	**.68**	+.62	10.67

Note: Moderate correlations (.3 or larger) in bold-italic, large correlations (.5 or larger) in bold.

[12] Related, the alternate framework of moral foundations appears to be similarly unstable (e.g. Smith et al. 2017).

Table 4 presents correlations between each ideological construct and partisanship. Even so, strong links between ideological constructs mostly appear among the knowledgeable few. Only the top 13% of the public consistently show large correlations (.5 or larger) or nearly so across all constructs, including partisanship. Moderate correlations at (.3 or larger) penetrate the next quarter in knowledge consistently too. Only two of eight correlations between ideological constructs reach the moderate level in the middle third of the public. In other words, ideological constructs are really only linked for the most knowledgeable 38% of the public.

Partisanship has the strongest link to three of the four ideological constructs overall, which might point to partisanship as the unifying cause. The exception is traditionalism, which has closer links to ideology ID. Recall, though, that partisanship has twice as many outlying adherents as ideology ID, which probably makes partisanship a more influential force on traditionalism overall. The top-down knowledge-dependent model finds substantially more support here.

Ideology and party identifications have grown more substantially correlated, and that relationship has grown over the past several decades (Kinder & Kalmoe 2017). Even so, in 2016, just 51% of the public identified with a party and reported a matching ideological identification.[13]

The Electoral Impact of Ideology

Vote choice is the most powerful form of mass participation in a democracy. How do ideological constructs weigh in that choice? And do they differ by knowledge? I trade causal leverage for breadth: panel data is limited, so I rely on simultaneous measures of voting and each construct. The risk is that attentive voters often adopt the major policy views and values expressed by their preferred candidate, as opposed to choosing the candidate because of those views (e.g. Goren 2005; Lenz 2012; McCann 1997). Vote choice is coded 1 for Republicans, 0 for Democrats.

[13] In 2016, full-sample correlations grew +.06-.12 (egal.), +.12-.23 (trad.), +.06-.26 (policy), +.21 (ID), +.08-.21 (party).

I follow the conventional psychological approach to ideological analysis of presenting bivariate probit models, which risks ignoring alternative explanations. Probit coefficient indicate substantive power, which is important, but it is insensitive to underlying distributions. I prefer the pseudo-R^2, which tells us how well each factor can explain variance in vote choice on its own. These tests are limited to voters only, who tend to be more knowledgeable. Only two percent of them fall into the lowest group, so I combine them with the second lowest group. Table 5 presents the results.

Table 5: Ideology in Presidential Vote Choice, 1984-2016

	Full Sample	Lower 13%	Middle 32%	High 33%	Highest 22%	Info Gain	
Egalitarianism (rev.)	*N*=10,403					Highest - Lowest	Highest ÷ Lowest
Bivariate probit	1.58 (.08)	1.03 (.16)	1.32 (.08)	1.75 (.11)	2.00 (.11)	+.97	1.94
Bivariate pseudo r^2	**.15**	**.05**	**.10**	**.19**	**.28**	**+.23**	**5.60**
Moral Tradition	*N*=9,036						
Bivariate probit	1.29 (.10)	.88 (.09)	1.07 (.11)	1.29 (.10)	1.74 (.10)	+.86	1.98
Bivariate pseudo r^2	**.13**	**.04**	**.08**	**.14**	**.26**	**+.22**	**6.50**
Policy Views (rev.)	*N*=9,891						
Bivariate probit	2.10 (.32)	1.38 (.21)	1.75 (.34)	2.35 (.38)	2.67 (.43)	+1.29	1.93
Bivariate pseudo r^2	**.21**	**.08**	**.14**	**.26**	**.37**	**+.29**	**4.63**
Ideology ID	*N*=9,834						
Bivariate probit	1.91 (.14)	.97 (.19)	1.57 (.16)	2.12 (.14)	2.54 (.11)	+2.57	2.62
Bivariate pseudo r^2	**.23**	**.04**	**.14**	**.29**	**.43**	**+.39**	**10.75**
Partisanship	*N*=10,416						
Bivariate probit	1.81 (.06)	1.42 (.08)	1.77 (.06)	1.89 (.07)	2.11 (.08)	+.69	1.49
Bivariate pseudo r^2	**.49**	**.32**	**.47**	**.52**	**.60**	**+.38**	**1.88**

Note: Weighted. Probit estimates, robust standard errors clustered by year (in parentheses).

In the full sample, partisanship explains two to four times more variance than any ideological construct. Among those, ID and policy views outperform values.[14] Once more, we see huge differences across knowledge levels for each ideological construct. Ideological constructs for the top

[14] 2016 pseudo r^2 estimates were substantially stronger: .21 (egal.), .28 (trad.), .43 (policy), .42 (ID), and .58 (party).

22% in knowledge explain five to 11 times more variance than the bottom 13%, and about three times more than the next highest third of the public. Values perform especially badly overall.

Partisanship's strength grows less with knowledge, and it powerfully predicts voting even at the lowest knowledge levels. In fact, the predictive power of partisanship in the lowest group is higher than the power of values for the highest group, and partisanship in the second lowest group surpasses ID and policy views for the top group.

What does this say about the breadth of ideology? Only the top 22% hold ideological constructs that consistently predict a quarter or more of the variance in vote choice on their own, when partisanship explains well over half the variance. If you feel generous, we could include the next third of the public for whom ideological constructs explain even variance. Like the other tests before, these suggest only a minority who vote ideologically. That fits also well with Jost's (2006) evidence showing 28% of voters choosing a candidate with 80% ideological loyalty.

All this arose without putting each construct head-to-head against partisanship in multivariate models, where, in additional tests, values add little purchase at any level of political sophistication. That suggests the power of values largely overlaps with partisanship and ideological identification, which correspond primarily among the most knowledgeable people. Similarly, adding policy views to a model of partisanship predicting votes adds virtually nothing; adding partisanship to a model of policy views predicting votes adds much (Kalmoe 2018b).

The results match Kinder and Kalmoe's (2017) multivariate tests, which show that ideological identification only predicts vote choice for the most knowledgeable individuals, whereas partisanship strongly predicts voting across the full sample. Distributional differences make the difference even starker, since thinly populated poles drive ideology results. Adjusting for those differences reduces ideological influence on voting to a small fraction of partisanship's size.

Pointing the Causal Arrow

Feldman (2003) notes that correlations between political values and policy attitudes are not sufficient to establish value-based reasoning. The same is true for other ideological constructs. The danger is that some third factor explains relationships involving political ideology, and partisanship is by far the largest threat. Lay theories assume principles and issues drive partisan alignment, but panels and experiments show causality running mostly the other way. Parents and social identities shape partisanship instead (e.g. Achen & Bartels 2016; Jennings et al. 2009).

Partisanship's large stability advantage over ideology in all forms and greater potency overall make it tough for ideology to have much causal influence in comparison. Likewise, Goren's (2005) panel data shows partisanship changes in core political values but not the reverse. Even for politically engaged people, their attitudes, organization, and self-description are largely a product of their partisanship, not the other way around (Berinsky 2008; Lenz 2012; Zaller 1992). In other words, correlations then would show partisan choice rather than ideological choice.

All this suggests no real ideological commitments for most people—just unprincipled and issue-free partisanship mostly reflecting an alignment of social identities and parental inheritance (e.g. Achen & Bartels 2016; Campbell et al. 1960; Green et al. 2004; Jennings et al 2009; Mason 2018). Partisanship is the political North Star, not a commitment to policy or principle.

Beyond the scope of this paper, I suspect many ideology-related findings in psychology will strengthen if they substituted partisanship. Jost and others are non-committal on causal directions within the ideological structure (e.g. Jost et al. 2009), but the models exclude politically and psychologically potent identities like partisanship, race, religion, and place (e.g. Cramer 2016; Dawson 1994; Green et al. 2004; Jardina 2018; Kinder 2003; Mason 2018). That omission is notable: groups tower over ideology in mass reasoning (e.g. Kinder & Kalmoe 2017).

With partisanship in view and root causes routed through partisanship, it becomes easier to imagine many sociological confounds—particularly the social groups that comprise each party

coalition. For example, evangelical Christians strongly identify with the Republican Party and with conservative political orientations, and that carries a host of lifestyles and practices. Recognizing partisanship as an alternative explanation leads to theoretical questions the literature now avoids.

Inconvenient Facts about Convenience Samples

The results above show ideological performance depends almost entirely on high levels of political sophistication. Given the well-documented 'low mean, high variance' of knowledge in the public (Converse 2000), the sophistication of study subjects becomes of utmost importance. This isn't a problem in political science because that discipline expects representative samples for all observational tests.[15] Psychology, by contrast, relies almost exclusively on convenience samples, even for observational tests, with college students in particular disproportion.

Adult samples are often better on external validity than student samples, as Jost and colleagues (2003) recognize: "political ideology probably has greater consistency and meaning for college-educated respondents" and conservatism on campus may differ from conservatism beyond. However, adult convenience samples are far from representative, and that could bias inferences. Non-representative samples are only a threat to external validity if they diverge substantially from the population *relative to the object of study*, namely, ideology (Krupnikov & Levine 2014; Sears 1986). But there is reason to worry with college and adult convenience samples.

College students are more homogeneous, and risks are therefore more predictable. Ideology depends on political knowledge, and knowledge has two crosscutting confounds in college students. On one hand, knowledge, participation, and partisanship are weaker in young people, which hinders ideological organization. On the other, well-educated people are stronger on those dimensions. Jost (2006) says under 10% of his student samples decline to place themselves on the ideology scale, compared to a quarter to a third in representative samples. That's a problem for generalizing to the

[15] Political science accepts convenience samples in experiments since those provide better internal validity, but reviewers and editors remain highly attuned to concerns about the external validity of subjects, stimuli, and environment.

full public, especially when differences in identification rates almost certainly indicate more sophisticated participants overall (Kinder & Kalmoe 2017). So what is the distribution of knowledge across sample types of varying national representativeness?

In 2010, I fielded two nationally representative U.S. surveys with Knowledge Networks (now GfK) with three standard multiple-choice political knowledge questions: 1) John Roberts' position in government, 2) the branch that ultimately decides constitutionality, and 3) the proportion of Congressional votes to override a veto. I summed correct answers in a 0-to-1 index. Merging both studies shows average U.S. answers just over half right (m = .59, $s.d.$ = .32, n = 906).[16]

I fielded the same questions in three studies on Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), a popular and inexpensive alternative for adult samples that are more diverse on several dimensions than most student samples.[17] The platform produces representative results on some tests, but not on others (Berinsky et al. 2012; Krupnikov & Levine 2014). MTurkers had consistently and significantly higher levels of knowledge than representative samples, about 74% correct compared to 59% (2012 study: m = .73, $s.d.$ = .29, n = 1017; 2013 study: m = .76, $s.d.$ = .28, n = 887; 2015 study: m = .73, $s.d.$ = .30, n = 835). Averages for other kinds of adult samples would depend on the particulars for each.

Student samples at large research universities had more mixed results. They came from a public university in the Midwest in 2010 (intro psychology and communication), a private Mid-Atlantic university in 2012 (intro media & public affairs), and two at a public university in the South in 2016 and 2017 (intro mass communication and political science). Those studies show a range of knowledge levels similar to or greater than national samples, reinforcing the need to measure knowledge (Midwest: m = .64, $s.d.$ = .31, n = 370; Mid-Atlantic: m = .81, $s.d.$ = .23, n = 277; South 2016: m = .55, $s.d.$ = .33, n = 535; South 2017: m = .51, $s.d.$ = .39, n = 453). The Midwestern and

[16] Averages for individual studies were nearly identical: .57 and .60.
[17] Like student samples, MTurk skews toward young adults and a disproportionate number of Democrats, but the age range is still better, encompassing 20-40 well with a smattering of older people.

Mid-Atlantic school averages are significantly larger than the national study; the Southern school's averages were significantly smaller. All samples showed substantial variation in knowledge levels.

Knowledge differences are not *direct* evidence of external validity trouble, so I test that with correlations between ideology and partisanship for each sample, where available.[18] The Pearson's correlation in the nationally representative sample is .62; by contrast, the two non-South student samples have correlations of .82 and .77, respectively, and one MTurk sample has a correlation of .75. In other words, ideological links are notably stronger in most convenience samples, corresponding with average levels of political knowledge. Partisanship explains 38% of the variance in ideology; the median in the convenience samples is 59%. The threat of inflated relationships in convenience samples is real, and it undermines broad generalizations about ideological power.

DISCUSSION

Kinder (1998) said, "If, in the end, the modesty and contingency of the effects of principles disappoint those who yearn for a politics of ideas, others may be surprised that ideas count at all" (p. 812). As I have shown here, ideas *do* count for some—quite a bit, in fact—but, whether formed as values or broader ideological orientations, those ideas count little for *most* people. Ideology is an important political psychological construct, but it only actualizes in a sophisticated few.

The results here confirm that few possess *realized* ideological orientations in any form—ideological identity, core political values, and policy views—in sharp contrast with grandiose claims. In particular, 1) the modest correlations found in past work do not justify the substantial power attributed to ideology, 2) tests show political knowledge strongly conditions the distribution, coherence, stability, and strength of ideological constructs, and 3) many political psychology samples employ participants with above-average levels of political sophistication. Taken together, what appears at first to be evidence of strong ideology actually reveals a minority of ideologues in a sea of

[18] Ideological identification was unmeasured in a national study, the Southern student study, and two MTurk studies.

ideologically unmoored citizens. Partisan social identities fare far better, but even they only structure attitudes when partisan implications are obvious, depending again on knowledge.

More broadly, most claims about psychological predispositions structuring political values and preferences must necessarily founder on the stark lack of structure and stability in the public: it is impossible for structuring predispositions to be powerful and enduring when most people's political beliefs lack structure and endurance. Most people lack the ability to form the presumed coherent, durable orientations, and those that do struggle to connect those orientations to political choices. Only those deeply engaged in politics show stronger signs of constraint.

The vital moderating role of knowledge supports the top-down "discursive superstructure" of elite-led policy and ideology cues may be substantially stronger than the bottom-up motivational affinities, as Federico and Malka (2018) argue. That's because the weak-to-absent structure among people who aren't attentive to elite discourse suggests that discourse is essential. We also know the enormous sway that elites have to change the public's policy preferences in a heartbeat (e.g. Barber & Pope 2018; Lenz 2012; Zaller 1992).

In the biggest picture, this work responds to Jon Krosnick and Kathleen McGraw's (2002) call for "a self-conscious attempt to contribute to psychological theory by paying careful attention to political context" (p. 84), by bridging gaps between psychology and political science to infuse the literature on ideology with far more caution. Political context, in this case, is the reality that many citizens disengage from politics, which explains their political incoherence and instability.

Best Practices for Ideological Analysis

We need more consistent analytical benchmarks in debates about public reasoning to help us avoid talking past each other. As Converse (2000) notes, "[r]ancor sanctified by 'data' is mindless when, as is not uncommon, contrasting results actually stem from differences in method" (p. 336).

In light of the results above, I make four recommendations for improving inferences from ideological analysis in political psychology.[19]

1) Consider ideological measure distributions when making claims about their breadth in the public and the reach of their power. Many ideological measures suffer from non-attitudes and substance-less middling scores, leaving only a handful of participants driving results erroneously generalized to the whole sample. Reporting conventional distributional stats and standardizing measures can help somewhat, but high-leverage outliers may remain. When comparing the relative power of two factors (e.g. partisanship & ideology) or one factor over time, Bartels (2000) provides a good method for coding and analyzing ordinal scales, explicitly modeling distributions in estimates.

2) Measure and discuss levels of political knowledge in your sample compared to the population to which you generalize. General knowledge is OK, but study-specific info is even better. Are your participants more politically engaged and knowledgeable than the average citizen? If so relationships found between ideology and other outcomes are probably inflated compared to the general population. Look to nationally representative social scientific surveys for good benchmarks. Delli Carpini and Keeter's (1996) items provide a good common index of U.S. general knowledge.

3) Test knowledge-ideology interactions to see whose results drive average estimates. Note that some political judgments are easy while others are hard (Carmines & Stimson 1980). Hard judgments—abstract, technical, complex—are where knowledge matters most. But even seemingly obvious connections—like moral traditionalism and abortion above—still depend on knowledge.

4) Try substituting partisanship for ideology, or at least check to ensure that results attributed to ideology aren't really due to partisanship in multivariate tests. Recognize that partisan

[19] Mark Brandt (Oct. 5, 2017) provided a constructive review of Kinder and Kalmoe (2017). He critiques our limited engagement with the recent flourishing ideology work, but acknowledges the need to recognize that ideology isn't for everyone and its distinction from partisanship. I've hopefully addressed the political psychology literature better here, and Brandt's recommendations for political psychologists align well with mine.

identity is a *social* identity that has little to do with ideological reasoning—it's not a better measure of ideology. Partisanship usually outperforms ideology in mass political attitudes and behaviors.

By implementing these practices, ideology scholars will generalize the breadth and power of ideology better, avoiding past inferential errors found throughout the field's most prominent work.

CONCLUSIONS

Psychologists criticize behavioral models that lack verisimilitude to well-documented cognitive biases and motivational limits in ordinary people (e.g. Abelson 1976; Simon 1986). Public opinion scholars have similarly criticized naïve "folk theories of democracy," which imagine a knowledgeable public that uses broad principles and self-interest to make sound judgments in policy and leader selection (e.g. Achen & Bartels 2016). Unfortunately, political psychology tends to go even further, with broad theories of ideology in politics that *extend beyond* into everyday life.

Those maximal ideology claims presume too much, given holes in the evidence—a "succession of steps grossly implausible as a model of standard human functioning," to borrow Abelson's (1976) words (p. 59). As Herbert Simon (1985) said, "[p]eople are, at best, rational in terms of what they are aware of, and they can be aware of only tiny, disjointed facets of reality" (p. 302). Why would politics—a notoriously complex and distant domain—be any better?

My integration and evidence show broad and strong ideology claims are unfounded, arising from inattention to a range of methodological and inferential pitfalls. Ideology is only strong for a knowledgeable minority with real political commitments. Many people claim to be liberal or conservative (left or right), but they are 'telling more than they can know' about their views (Nisbett & Wilson 1977), at least by some interpretations. We should discount their claims accordingly.

In 2006, Jost boldly proclaimed "the end of the end of ideology," by turns ignoring and misreading the relevant political science research on ideology. A more faithful representation of the evidence—even his own—shows that majorities in mass publics today are *not* ideological. Moreover,

majorities have *never been* ideological, and majorities *never will be* ideological, because they *cannot be* in any imaginable political context. Public motivation and knowledge necessary to organize political views coherently—or even stably—is simply absent for most people, and that is unlikely to change. Elite-level politics is broadly ideological, but little of that organized conflict filters down to the public for lack of attention. Only the most engaged citizens receive and follow those cues.

The sound and fury of *mass* politics today is real, but for most people it expresses partisan attachments and ethnocentric prejudices, *signifying nothing* as far as ideology goes.

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