The End of the End of Ideology

John T. Jost *New York University*

The "end of ideology" was declared by social scientists in the aftermath of World War II. They argued that (a) ordinary citizens' political attitudes lack the kind of stability, consistency, and constraint that ideology requires; (b) ideological constructs such as liberalism and conservatism lack motivational potency and behavioral significance; (c) there are no major differences in content (or substance) between liberal and conservative points of view; and (d) there are few important differences in psychological processes (or styles) that underlie liberal versus conservative orientations. The end-of-ideologists were so influential that researchers ignored the topic of ideology for many years. However, current political realities, recent data from the American National Election Studies, and results from an emerging psychological paradigm provide strong grounds for returning to the study of ideology. Studies reveal that there are indeed meaningful political and psychological differences that covary with ideological self-placement. Situational variables—including system threat and mortality salience—and dispositional variables—including openness and conscientiousness—affect the degree to which an individual is drawn to liberal versus conservative leaders, parties, and opinions. A psychological analysis is also useful for understanding the political divide between "red states" and "blue states."

Keywords: ideology, public opinion, liberalism, conservatism, political psychology

The history of the continuing conflict between left and right—and its always tentative and changing, yet always advancing resolutions—is in many ways the history of the development of civilized man. (Silvan Tomkins, 1965, p. 27)

The end of ideology was declared more than a generation ago by sociologists and political scientists who—after the titanic struggle between the ideological extremes of fascism and communism in the middle of the 20th century—were more than glad to see it go. The work of Edward Shils (1955/1968b), Raymond Aron (1957/1968), Daniel Bell (1960), Seymour Lipset (1960), and Philip Converse (1964) was extremely influential in the social and behavioral sciences, including psychology. The general thesis of these authors was that in the aftermath of World War II and the Cold War, both the right and the left had been equally discredited and that "a kind of exhaustion of political ideas" had taken place in the West (Lane, 1962, p. 15). Ideological distinctions, it was suggested, were devoid of social and psychological significance for most people, especially in the United States (see, e.g., Apter, 1964; Lasch, 1991; Rejai, 1971; Waxman, 1968). The end-of-ideologists were so successful that even now, more than 40 years later, my students often ask me whether ideological constructs such as left and right (and, in the American context, liberalism and conservatism) are relevant, meaningful, and useful. This article summarizes my main reasons for answering them in the affirmative.

The End-of-Ideology Claims and Their Effect on Psychology

There were four related claims that led to the end-of-ideology conclusion, and in conjunction they have cast a long shadow over political psychology. The first claim has arguably had the greatest impact within psychology, and it grew out of Converse's (1964) famous argument that ordinary citizens' political attitudes lack the kind of logical consistency and internal coherence that would be expected if they were neatly organized according to ideological schemata. A second and related claim is that most people are unmoved by ideological appeals and that abstract credos associated with liberalism and conservatism lack motivational potency and behavioral significance. The third claim is that there are really no substantive differences in terms of philosophical or ideological content between liberal and conservative points of view. A fourth claim, which first emerged as a criticism of Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford's (1950) *The Authoritarian Personality*, is that there are no fundamental psychological differences between proponents of left-wing and right-wing ideologies.

The deadening impact of these conclusions on the study of ideology in social, personality, and political psy-

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to John T. Jost, Department of Psychology, New York University, 6 Washington Place, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10003. E-mail: john.jost@nyu.edu

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John T. Jost

chology can scarcely be exaggerated. In many ways, psychologists were well primed to accept the end-of-ideology thesis, because it coincided with crises of theoretical and methodological confidence surrounding disciplinary staples such as personality, attitudes, and human nature (e.g., Abelson, 1972; Bem, 1967; Gergen, 1973; Mischel, 1968). McGuire (1986/1999), for instance, observed,

> This end-of-ideology conclusion by survey researchers is in agreement with the recent emphasis by basic researchers on situational rather than dispositional determination of behavior, on the separate storage of affect and information about topics of meaning, on one's dependence on self-observation of one's external behavior to ascertain one's own beliefs, and on the experiencing of affective reaction to a topic even before one recognizes what the topic is. (p. 343)

A consequence of psychologists' general acceptance of the end-of-ideology thesis was that once thriving research programs on individual differences in political orientation (e.g., DiRenzo, 1974; Wilson, 1973) and the effects of societal threat on authoritarianism (Sales, 1972, 1973) lay dormant for almost two decades. As a result, very little theoretical or empirical progress on the subject of ideology occurred during this period. Fortunately, many of the same ideas cropped up again in largely autonomous research programs years later (e.g., Altemeyer, 1981; Doty, Peterson, & Winter, 1991; Sidanius, 1985, 1988; Tetlock, 1983, 1984), but it took at least another decade for the insights from these isolated studies to achieve integration (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004; Duckitt, 2001; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003a, 2003b).

The thesis of this article is that the demise of ideology, much like the rumored demise of personality and attitudes (e.g., Kenrick & Funder, 1988; McGuire, 1986/1999; Mischel & Shoda, 1995), was declared prematurely. I believe that recent developments in psychological research and the world of politics—including responses to 9/11, the Bush presidency, the Iraq War, polarizing Supreme Court nominations, Hurricane Katrina, and ongoing controversies over scientific and environmental policies—provide ample grounds for revisiting the strong claims made by end-of-ideology theorists. I find it doubtful that there ever was a truly nonideological era in American (or modern European) politics (see also Bobbio, 1996; Lefebvre, 1968; Mills, 1960/1968), but even casual observers of today's headlines, newscasts, and late night talk shows cannot escape the feeling that ideology is everywhere.[1] Consider, for example, this smattering of *New York Times* headlines: "Ripples from Law Banning Abortion Spread through South Dakota"; "Demonstrations on Immigration Harden a Divide"; "Populist Movements Wrest Much of Latin America from Old Parties"; "Army Fires at Protesters as Nepal's Political Crisis Deepens"; "Democrats Try to Use Katrina as GOP Used 9/11"; and "Party on Right Gains Support After Rioting Upsets France." These headlines, which were drawn from a single, unexceptional week (April 16–23, 2006), illustrate that political ideology and its effects are experienced daily, not only in the United States but around the world.

How Is Ideology Defined?

Although much of the end-of-ideology debate hinges on one's definition of ideology, there are important empirical issues for psychologists and others to investigate. The term originated in the late 18th century, when it was used mainly to refer to the science of ideas, a discipline that is now known as the sociology of knowledge. The concept was later adopted by Marx and Engels (1846/1970) in *The German Ideology* and used in two different senses, both of which are still common: (a) a relatively neutral sense in which *ideology* refers to any abstract or symbolic meaning system used to explain (or justify) social, economic, or political realities; and (b) a pejorative sense in which *ideology* denotes a web of ideas that are distorted, contrary to reality, and subject to "false consciousness." In light of the second meaning, it is ironic that many end-of-ideologists interpreted empirical evidence of the flawed and fragmented nature of people's political attitudes as indicating that ideology does not exist (e.g., see Converse, 1964; McGuire, 1986/1999; Tedin, 1987). It is worth pointing out that in some intellectual traditions (including Marxism and the Frankfurt School), certain forms of irrationality (e.g., in the service of justifying the status quo) would suggest the influence of ideology rather than its absence (e.g., Elster, 1982; Jost, 1995). My focus is on the characteristics and consequences of political ideology (rather than, say, religious or scientific ideologies), because it was politics that

[1] A Google search on "ideology" as a keyword produced over 57 million hits. There were over 24 million hits in response to "liberalism" and over 18 million hits in response to "conservatism" (see http://www.google.com; last visited June 10, 2006).

provided the primary subject matter for end-of-ideology pronouncements.

Defining Ideology Away?

Most political scientists have distanced themselves from the concept of false consciousness and the critical origins of the study of ideology more generally. Following Converse (1964), they have treated ideology as a relatively stable and coherent (or constrained) belief system within the mind of an individual. Defining ideology as an internally consistent belief system made it easier to study in a value-neutral way, but—as I show—it also made it less likely that ordinary people would pass the stringent tests for demonstrating ideological capacity. Converse is by no means alone in emphasizing stability and organization as key features of ideological belief systems:

> The term ideology is used . . . to stand for an organization of opinions, attitudes, and values—a way of thinking about man and society. We may speak of an individual's total ideology or of his ideology with respect to different areas of social life: politics, economics, religion, minority groups, and so forth. (Adorno et al., 1950, p. 2)

> "Ideology" refers to more than doctrine. It links particular actions and mundane practices with a wider set of meanings and, by doing so, lends a more honorable and dignified complexion to social conduct. . . . From another vantage point, ideology may be viewed as a cloak for shabby motives and appearances. (Apter, 1964, p. 16)

> An *ideology* is an organization of beliefs and attitudes—religious, political, or philosophical in nature—that is more or less institutionalized or shared with others, deriving from external authority. (Rokeach, 1968, pp. 123–124)

> "[I]deology" refers to patterns or *gestalts* of attitudes. (Billig, 1984, p. 446)

> Ideologies are broad and general, pervade wide areas of belief and behavior, and give core meaning to many issues of human concern. They unify thought and action. (Kerlinger, 1984, p. 13)

> The term "political ideology" is normally defined as an interrelated set of attitudes and values about the proper goals of society and how they should be achieved. An ideology has two distinct and at least analytically separate components—affect and cognition. (Tedin, 1987, p. 65)

All of these definitions—even those written by nonpsychologists—are psychological in nature. They conceptualize ideology as a belief system of the individual that is typically shared with an identifiable group and that organizes, motivates, and gives meaning to political behavior broadly construed. That is, every definition of an ideological belief system carries with it certain assumptions concerning its degree of cognitive organization, affective and motivational qualities, and capacity for instigating action. These assumptions may well be reasonable, but they make clear that the debate about whether ordinary people possess ideology is in part a question about whether they satisfy the various criteria proposed by the experts.

This is demonstrated most readily by considering a definition that is an extreme but revealing example. Shils (1968a) defined ideology in an especially narrow way, listing nine criteria for distinguishing ideology from related concepts such as outlook, creeds, and intellectual movements. Ideology, according to Shils (1968a), requires

> (a) explicitness of formulation; (b) intended systemic integration around a particular moral or cognitive belief; (c) acknowledged affinity with other past and contemporaneous patterns; (d) closure to novel elements or variations; (e) imperativeness of manifestation in conduct; (f) accompanying affect; (g) consensus demanded of those who accept them; (h) authoritativeness of promulgation; and (i) association with a corporate body intended to realize the pattern of beliefs. (p. 66)[2]

With criteria as numerous and strict as these, it is little wonder that so many authors have concluded that the general population is not up to the challenge of being "ideological." In many ways, ideology was, quite literally, defined away by the end-of-ideologists. Whether people stopped being ideological in *any* meaningful or interesting way, however, is quite a different matter. Lane (1962) noted that people may possess "latent" if not "forensic" ideologies (p. 16), and Kerlinger (1967) insisted that "the man-in-the-street *does* have attitudes" (p. 119, note 6). Dember (1974) argued that ideology is in fact "the most potent form of ideation" and that it makes "ordinary motives look pale and insignificant" (p. 166). The sociologist C. Wright Mills (1960/1968) had little patience for the end-of-ideologists, whom he dubbed "dead-enders." He wrote, with evident exasperation, "It is a kindergarten fact that any political reflection that is of possible political significance is *ideological*: in its terms policies, institutions, men of power are criticized or approved" (p. 130).[3]

In this article, I adopt Tedin's (1987) relatively modest definition of political ideology as an interrelated set of moral and political attitudes that possesses cognitive, affective, and motivational components. That is, ideology helps to explain why people do what they do; it organizes their values and beliefs and leads to political behavior. This definition, although broad, has the advantage of paralleling ordinary and professional usage in both psychology (Dember, 1974; McGuire, 1986/1999; Tetlock, 1983; Tomkins, 1963, 1965) and political science (Bell, 1960; Conover & Feldman, 1981; Lane, 1962; McClosky & Zaller, 1984),

[2] Shils (1968a) also suggested that all ideologies "passionately oppose the productions of the cultural institutions of the central institutional system" (p. 68), but this definition seems unnecessarily restrictive in yet another way. It arbitrarily exempts belief systems that are mainstream, centrist, and that "affirm the existing order" (p. 67) from being considered ideological. Shils therefore excluded the possibility of "system-justifying" ideologies altogether (see Jost & Hunyady, 2005). His treatment of ideology also obscures the fact that end-of-ideology claims are themselves at least partly ideological (Bobbio, 1996; Lefebvre, 1968; Mills, 1960/1968).

[3] Mills (1960/1968) introduced here an evaluative dimension to ideological thinking that is overlooked in many of the definitions that stress only cognitive organization (internal coherence). In this article I show that evaluation is indeed central to how ordinary people use ideological constructs. By focusing on the evaluation of "policies, institutions, [and] men of power," Mills's account anticipates the distinction between system-justifying and system-challenging ideologies (e.g., see Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004).

and it gives ordinary citizens a reasonable chance of empirically satisfying the criteria for being ideological. Kerlinger (1984) put the point well:

> Whether conservatism and liberalism are typical conceptual tools for the man-in-the-street is not the central point. For the scientist, too, liberalism and conservatism are abstractions like any other abstract concepts he works with: introversion, intelligence, radicalism, achievement, political development and the like. To be sure, most people don't recognize their abstract nature and certainly don't use them as social scientists do. Nevertheless, they are quite familiar with their behavioral and environmental manifestations. (p. 217)

Without assuming that people consciously or fully appreciate the meaning and significance of ideology, we may—following Kerlinger, Lane, Mills, and others—take seriously the empirical possibility that it is indeed a factor in their everyday lives.

Core and Peripheral Features of Liberalism and Conservatism

Most treatments of political ideology have focused on the left–right (or, especially in the United States, the liberalism–conservatism) distinction (Jost et al., 2003a, 2003b; Knight, 1990). Political uses of the spatial metaphor of "left" and "right" may be traced to 18th century seating arrangements in the French parliament (e.g., Bobbio, 1996), and it is a metaphor that applies far better to modern (i.e., postscientific enlightenment) history than to earlier periods. Although the left–right distinction is by no means airtight, it has been the single most useful and parsimonious way to classify political attitudes for more than 200 years. It has found resonance in almost every cultural context in which it has been introduced. Nevertheless, because some of the issues and opinions that have been referred to as liberal/left-wing and conservative/right-wing have changed over the years and from place to place, it is worth distinguishing between core (stable) and peripheral (potentially malleable) aspects of ideological belief systems.

My colleagues and I identified two relatively stable, core dimensions that seem to capture the most meaningful and enduring differences between liberal and conservative ideologies: (a) attitudes toward inequality and (b) attitudes toward social change versus tradition (Jost et al., 2003a, 2003b). This bipartite definition is highly consistent with most contemporary treatments of the liberalism–conservatism distinction in political science (and elsewhere), including the following:

> Politicians and the policies they espouse . . . are usually described as liberal if they seek to advance such ideas as *equality*, *aid to the disadvantaged*, *tolerance of dissenters, and social reform*; and as conservative if they place particular emphasis on *order, stability*, *the needs of business, differential economic rewards, and defense of the status quo*. (McClosky & Zaller, 1984, p. 189, italics added)

> Conservatives consider people to be inherently *unequal and due unequal rewards*; liberals are *equalitarian*. Conservatives venerate *tradition* and—most of all—*order* and *authority*; liberals believe planned *change* brings the possibility of improvement. (Erikson, Luttbeg, & Tedin, 1988, p. 75, italics added)

When considering whether ideology exists and whether it possesses cognitive organization, motivational significance, political content, and psychological specificity, I focus on core features of liberalism and conservatism, rather than on peripheral issues (such as attitudes concerning the size of government, military spending, or immigration policies) that vary in their ideological relevance across time and place. Before revisiting the end-of-ideology claims in detail, it is useful to highlight some of the ways in which a psychological analysis diverges from paradigmatic approaches in sociology and political science. By making interdisciplinary differences in emphasis more explicit I hope to show that a cognitive–motivational analysis of political ideology can usefully supplement (not supplant) the valuable demographic, historical, and institutional analyses offered by experts in neighboring fields.

A Cognitive–Motivational Analysis of Political Ideology

Psychologists begin with Adorno et al.'s (1950) assumption that "ideologies have for different individuals, different degrees of appeal, a matter that depends upon the individual's needs and the degree to which these needs are being satisfied or frustrated" (p. 2). This formulation suggests the likely relevance of a wide range of dispositional (personality) and situational (environmental) variables that are capable of affecting one's psychological needs and therefore one's political orientation. My analysis implies that human beings will always crave some form of ideology, that is, some way of imbuing social life with meaning and inspiration (Dember, 1974; Jost, Fitzsimons, & Kay, 2004; Tomkins, 1965). At the same time, the approach I am suggesting is dynamic and motivational and can therefore explain "liberal shifts" and "conservative shifts" within individuals and populations as a function of changes in cognitive–motivational needs, such as needs to manage uncertainty and threat (see also Bonanno & Jost, in press; Cohen, Ogilvie, Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2005; Jost et al., 2003a, 2003b; Landau et al., 2004; Willer, 2004; Wilson, 1973).

Psychologists are able to explore features of ideology that are either overlooked or seen as out of bounds by sociologists and political scientists. This is because scholarship in political sociology during the end-of-ideology era has been largely descriptive in nature, focusing primarily on the question of whether political elites and their followers do or do not possess ideology and, if so, how much ideological consistency (or stability or constraint) is present. The emphasis, in other words, is on how to define ideology and how to describe the contents of specific ideologies. Beyond demographic (especially race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status) and institutional (e.g., media, advertising, partisan competition) factors, there has been little sustained attempt to try to explain why specific individuals (or groups or societies) gravitate toward liberal or conservative ideas. It is often assumed that people hold the beliefs they do because of their parents, their party, or their

position in society and that it is rare for citizens to examine or alter those beliefs in response to external events, even dramatic events such as 9/11.

To some laypersons and even to some political scientists, it may seem heretical to suggest that political opinions arise from psychological needs and motives, for it could mean that such opinions are irrational, capricious, or even pathological. George Will (2003), for instance, responded to an article titled "Political Conservatism as Motivated Social Cognition" (Jost et al., 2003a) as follows:

> "Motivated social cognition" refers to the "motivational underpinnings" of ideas, the "situational as well as dispositional variables" that foster particular beliefs. Notice: situations and dispositions—not reasons. Professors have reasons for their beliefs. Other people, particularly conservatives, have social and psychological explanations for their beliefs. "Motivated cognition" involves ways of seeing and reasoning about the world that are unreasonable because they arise from emotional, psychological needs.

There is a common misunderstanding, I think, of the discipline of psychology itself that lurks in the assumption that analyzing the motivational processes underlying specific belief formation (or preservation) is tantamount to exposing it as invalid. Social psychologists tend to assume that *every* belief—whether objectively valid or invalid—is at least partially motivated by subjective considerations such as epistemic needs for knowledge and meaning, existential needs for safety and reassurance, and relational needs for affiliation and social identification (e.g., Greenberg, Simon, Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Chatel, 1992; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Jost et al., 2003a; Kruglanski, 2004; Landau et al., 2004). In personal, political, religious, scientific, and many other domains, what we believe is an intricate mix of what we (and our friends) want to believe and what we are able to believe given the evidence that is accessible and available to us (see also Kunda, 1990).

Not all political attitudes are self-interested, either. Much evidence suggests that people are motivated to engage in "system justification"—defined as the tendency to defend, bolster, and rationalize the societal status quo—even when social change would be preferable from the standpoint of self-interest (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Jost & Hunyady, 2005). This motivation introduces a conservative "bias" that is counterintuitive to many political sociologists, including Lipset (1960), who have long assumed that "conservatism is especially vulnerable in a political democracy since, as Abraham Lincoln said, there are always more poor people than well-to-do ones, and promises to redistribute wealth are difficult to rebut" (p. 128). Although Lipset was right that the poor have always outnumbered the rich, the fact is that self-identified conservatives have outnumbered liberals in the United States for most of the 20th century (Knight, 1990, pp. 66–68) and in *every* National Election Study (see http://www.umich.edu/~nes/) between 1972 and 2004, even during periods of successful Democratic leadership (see G. Bishop, 2005, p. 118). The ratio of conservatives to liberals is now greater than 2 to 1 (Newport, 2003). Furthermore, efforts to redistribute wealth have been few and far between, and they have been remarkably easy to defeat, often because poor people are no more likely than the wealthy to support redistributive economic policies that would obviously benefit them (e.g., Frank, 2004; Gilens, 1999; Graetz & Shapiro, 2005). In some cases, the disadvantaged are even *more* likely than the advantaged to harbor attitudes that are congenial to the societal status quo (e.g., Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003).[4] The possibility that ideological preferences may derive from the psychological needs of individuals (as well as their demographic characteristics) is one that has not been seriously considered by sociologists and political scientists, in part because they have not taken seriously the notion that individuals have genuine ideological preferences at all.

Revisiting the End-of-Ideology Claims

End-of-ideology theorists have advanced four major claims that are in need of reevaluation. They have argued that ideologies such as liberalism and conservatism lack (a) cognitive structure, (b) motivational potency, (c) substantive philosophical differences, and (d) characteristic psychological profiles. I consider each of these claims separately and suggest that, whether or not they were defensible in the 1950s—the context in which they were developed—they are not defensible in the current political climate. To develop this argument, I draw on data from the American National Election Studies (ANES) as well as from other experimental and survey studies recently conducted by psychologists. The bulk of the evidence reveals that ideology is very much a part of most people's lives.

Do People Possess Coherent Ideological Belief Systems?

Building on his earlier collaborative work in *The American Voter* (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960), Converse (1964) argued to great effect that the vast majority of the American population would be hard-pressed to articulate coherent ideological principles. Although his point was quite different (and more specific) than the broader historical theses concerning the decline of ideology in the West advanced by Aron (1957/1968), Bell (1960), Lipset (1960), and Shils (1955/1968b), it was readily assimilated into the end-of-ideology framework.

Drawing on public opinion data from the 1950s, Converse (1964) argued that only a small and highly sophisticated layer of the populace is able or willing to resolve obvious inconsistencies among political beliefs or to orga-

[4] Lee Ross (personal communication, February 21, 2006) pointed out that middle- and upper-class liberal academics and others also routinely violate assumptions of economic self-interest by voting for candidates who "favor high taxes that they will have to pay, government spending on social welfare programs that they will not need, and affirmative action programs that will lessen their kids' life chances." This phenomenon, too, is consistent with a theory of political ideology as motivated social cognition (Jost et al., 2003a), insofar as people who are socially and economically secure have very little need to minimize personal uncertainty and threat by embracing conservatism. As one student aptly put it, "Liberalism is a luxury."

nize beliefs consistently according to philosophical definitions of left and right. This statement has had an extraordinary degree of impact, not only in political psychology (e.g., Billig, 1984; G. Bishop, 2005; Conover & Feldman, 1981; Kinder & Sears, 1985; McGuire, 1986/1999) but in popular culture as well. According to *The New Yorker* magazine,

> Forty years later, Converse's conclusions are still the bones at which the science of voting behavior picks. . . . Converse claimed that only around ten per cent of the public has what can be called, even generously, a political belief system . . . [He] concluded that "very substantial portions of the public" hold opinions that are essentially meaningless—off-the-top-of-the-head responses to questions they have never thought about, derived from no underlying set of principles. These people might as well base their political choices on the weather. And, in fact, many of them do. (Menand, 2004, pp. 92–94)

There is indeed widespread acceptance of what Converse (2000) felt was the "pithiest truth" about the information level of the electorate, namely that "the mean level is very low but the variance is very high" (p. 331). Furthermore, Converse (1964) was correct in observing that a significant minority of citizens (sometimes as much as one third) either cannot or will not locate themselves on a single bipolar liberalism–conservatism dimension. According to ANES results from presidential election years between 1972 and 2004, between 22% and 36% of survey respondents indicated that they either "haven't thought much about it" or "don't know" how to place themselves on a liberalism–conservatism scale. Although Converse's (1964, 2000) work deserves serious attention, I do not think it justifies the common conclusion that most citizens fail to use ideological terms coherently most of the time.

Current political realities. To begin with, Converse's (1964) thesis may apply better to the 1950s than to subsequent historical periods, although I have suggested that his conceptual and operational definitions probably led to an underestimation of the prevalence of ideology even in the 1950s. In any case, Converse believed that no more than 15% of the population (in 1956) satisfied the criteria for being ideological, but others have obtained higher estimates (e.g., Knight, 1990). In his analysis of the highly polarizing 1972 Nixon–McGovern presidential race, Stimson (1975) argued that "at least half of the eligible electorate (and more of the actual electorate) display[ed] evidence of belief structuring that is consistent with the standards originally laid down by Converse" (p. 414). Judd and Milburn (1980) similarly concluded that data from the 1970s "pose a substantial threat to Converse's original hypothesis that the attitude responses of the public at large are unstable, nearly random responses" (p. 82).

In retrospect, it appears that Converse's conclusions concerning the lack of ideology among ordinary citizens were drawn on the basis of survey data collected during one of the least politically charged periods in recent American history (Tedin, 1987). But there was always something paradoxical about touting the end of ideology in a decade that witnessed McCarthyism and the "Red Scare," a war in Korea to stop the threat of communism, ideological conflict over racial desegregation in American schools, the liberal Hungarian uprising against the Soviet Union, and many other politically charged events (see also Aron, 1957/1968, p. 27). The 1960s would soon find Americans and others grappling with political assassinations and a number of polarizing social, economic, and foreign policy issues, as well as student protests and race riots. The 1970s would bring an escalation of the Vietnam War (as well as opposition to it), the Watergate scandal and the subsequent impeachment of Richard Nixon, the rise of feminism and gay rights movements, and many other events of genuine ideological significance. These developments, which threatened the societal status quo, spurred a conservative reaction—what Frank (2004) referred to as a "backlash"—that would take over two decades to peak (if indeed it has peaked).

Although his *New Yorker* article was titled "The Unpolitical Animal," Menand (2004), too, sensed that the times had changed:

> Polls indicate much less volatility than usual, supporting the view that the public is divided into starkly antagonistic camps—the "red state–blue state" paradigm. If this is so, it suggests that we have at last moved past Converse's picture of an electoral iceberg, in which ninety per cent of the population is politically underwater. (p. 96)

Almost half of the counties in the United States have become so ideologically stable in recent years that they are politically uncompetitive in virtually every election, and not only because of partisan gerrymandering (e.g., see B. Bishop, 2004). Party loyalty has increased, and so has the proportion of strict party-line votes in Congress. Ticket splitting, in which voters cast ballots for Democratic and Republican candidates simultaneously, has fallen off dramatically. Political segregation is occurring more rapidly than racial segregation, and it appears to many that the nation is currently "in the midst of the most partisan era since Reconstruction" (Davidson, quoted in B. Bishop, 2004).

Empirical evidence. A large majority of the American public knows whether they usually prefer liberal or conservative ideas, and although Converse (1964) was right that they are far from completely consistent (or loyal), their political attitudes are meaningful and interpretable. According to my analyses of ANES data, over two thirds of respondents since 1972 and over three fourths since 1996 could and did place themselves on a bipolar liberalism–conservatism scale. In other studies that my colleagues and I have conducted, over 90% of college students chose to locate themselves on a liberalism–conservatism dimension, even when they were provided explicitly with options such as "don't know" and "haven't thought much about it." Most of the available evidence suggests that people who place themselves on such a scale do so with a reasonable (but not perfect) degree of accuracy, stability, and coherence (Conover & Feldman, 1981; Evans, Heath, & Lalljee, 1996; Feldman, 2003; Kerlinger, 1984; Knight, 1999; Noelle-Neumann, 1998). Factors such as education, involvement, expertise, and political sophistication are all known

to increase the degree of ideological coherence (Jacoby, 1991; Judd, Krosnick, & Milburn, 1981). As educational levels in the American population have increased, so, too, has ideological sophistication (Tedin, 1987, p. 83).

Evidence also indicates that individuals' belief systems are more tightly constrained around abstract rather than concrete (Peffley & Hurwitz, 1985) and core rather than peripheral issues that separate liberals and conservatives, such as resistance to social change and attitudes concerning social and economic equality (Jost et al., 2003a, 2003b). Conover and Feldman (1981), for instance, showed that Americans who evaluated conservatives favorably also possessed consistently favorable attitudes toward groups that uphold the status quo, serve social control functions, and are procapitalist (e.g., Protestants, White men, the police, the military, and Big Business). Conversely, respondents who evaluated liberals favorably held more favorable attitudes toward groups that question the status quo and seek egalitarian reforms (e.g., radical students, feminists, civil rights leaders, and minority activists). Feldman (1988) found that attitudes concerning equality were highly stable over time and consistently predicted ideological self-placement, political partisanship, candidate preferences, and opinions on many specific issues. Evans et al. (1996), too, recorded impressive levels of ideological stability and consistency in the British public in two areas: (a) egalitarianism with respect to income distribution and (b) support for traditional authorities versus agents of social change.

Disentangling ideology from political sophistication. Perhaps the biggest problem with using Converse's (1964) work to support end-of-ideology conclusions, however, was underscored by Kerlinger (1984), who wrote that the "denial of the attitude structure of mass publics was backed by research that could not bear the full weight of the conclusions drawn" (p. 218). The fact is that people can be both highly ideological and generally uninformed, but this possibility has never been sufficiently addressed in the political science literature (see also Achen, 1975, pp. 1229–1231). The end-of-ideologists made an unwarranted assumption that a lack of political sophistication among the general public should be counted as evidence for the meaninglessness of left and right. It does not follow that when citizens struggle to articulate a sophisticated, coherent ideology, they must be incapable of using ideology with either sophistication or coherence. Very few speakers can state precisely the grammatical and syntactical rules they obey when speaking their native languages, and yet they use language adeptly (albeit imperfectly).

Furthermore, one of the most notably distinctive features of ideology, from a psychological perspective, is that it breeds distortion, oversimplification, and selective processing of information at least as much as it breeds political sophistication (Dember, 1974; Glaser, 2005; Lavine, Lodge, & Freitas, 2005). A wealth of experimental evidence illustrates the biasing role of ideology with respect to cognitive processes such as attention, information processing, encoding, and memory recall (e.g., Ditto & Lopez, 1992; Lodge & Hamill, 1986; Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979; Pomerantz, Chaiken, & Tordesillas, 1995). There is also anecdotal and survey evidence that ideological conviction is associated with decreased rather than increased political sophistication and knowledge in the general population. Approximately 25% of American citizens—between 1 and 2 million people per day—have watched ideologically explicit Fox newscasts in recent years, but surveys show that these viewers, while politically engaged, are significantly less informed than others about the Iraq War and other important political issues (e.g., Janssen, 2003; see also Barker, 2002; Brock, 2004). Bush supporters, too, were far more likely than Kerry supporters in 2004 to falsely believe that (a) Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction; (b) most intelligence experts agreed that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction; (c) Iraq provided assistance to al-Qaeda; (d) the 9/11 Commission concluded that Iraq provided assistance to al-Qaeda; (e) the majority of world opinion supported the American invasion of Iraq; (f) the majority of world opinion favored Bush's reelection; (g) the majority of Islamic opinion welcomed American efforts to fight terrorism; and (h) Bush supported (rather than opposed) the Kyoto agreement on global warming and American participation in the International Criminal Court (see Kull, 2004). The point is not that conservatives are necessarily more "ideological" than liberals or that they are alone in their self-deception but that ideology plays an important role in distorting (as well as organizing) information. Thus, the most significant criticism of Converse's (1964) work is probably conceptual rather than empirical in nature: By equating ideology with internal consistency and internal consistency with political sophistication, he and his adherents may have mischaracterized the function of ideology in people's lives altogether.

Do Ideological Belief Systems Motivate People to Act?

A second major claim advanced by the end-of-ideologists was that ideology had lost its capacity to inspire collective action (e.g., Bell, 1960; Shils, 1958) or, as Lane (1962) summarized the point, "the transformation of broadly conceived political ideas into social action is no longer the center of an exciting struggle" (p. 15). This was widely regarded as a positive societal development by end-of-ideology proponents, who celebrated the decline of Marxist ideas in the West (Aron, 1957/1968; Bell, 1960, 1988; Fukuyama, 1992/2006b). Shils (1958), too, was heartened by the spirit of moderation he saw in the nascent conservative movement:

> The conservative revival, though genuine, is moderate. People take Burke in their stride. They have become "natural Burkeans" without making a noise about it. The *National Review*, despite its clamor, is isolated and unnoticed, and the effort to create a "conservative ideology" which would stand for more than moderation, reasonableness, and prudence has not been successful. (p. 456)

The end-of-ideologists heralded the "passing of fanaticism" and welcomed a new era of politics that would be determined not by ideological enthusiasts but by pragmatic moderates. In this respect and others, one could argue (with

the benefit of hindsight, of course) that they succumbed to wishful thinking.

Current political realities. The stunning organizational success of the conservative movement is one of the most significant events in American political history over the last 25 years or so, but it would stretch credulity beyond bounds to claim that it has been a "revolt of the moderates" (see, inter alia, Brock, 2004; Dean, 2006; Frank, 2004). There are many factors that help to explain how conservatives once inspired by fringe activists such as William F. Buckley (the founder of the *National Review*), Milton Friedman, and Barry Goldwater managed to reach what Brooks (2003) referred to as the "The Promised Land" of mainstream governance. These include (a) the mass defection of White southerners from the Democratic to the Republican party following liberal civil rights legislation in the 1960s and 1970s; (b) the development of a strong coalition involving economic conservatives and religious fundamentalists beginning in the 1970s; and (c) the powerful emergence of right-wing think tanks and media conglomerates, including Fox news and Christian/conservative talk radio networks (e.g., Barker, 2002; Brock, 2004; Graetz & Shapiro, 2005; Lakoff, 2004; Lind, 1996).

There are now scores of extraordinarily popular conservative radio and television personalities—including Rush Limbaugh, Bill O'Reilly, Ann Coulter, Sean Hannity, Joe Scarborough, and Michael Savage, to name just a few—and their popularity is hardly attributable to the quietude, moderation, reasonableness, or prudence that Shils (1958) saw in their predecessors. The ordinarily mild-mannered author Garrison Keillor (2004) detailed some of the changes vividly:

> Something has gone seriously haywire with the Republican Party. Once, it was the party of pragmatic Main Street businessmen in steel-rimmed spectacles who decried profligacy and waste, were devoted to their communities and supported the sort of prosperity that raises all ships. . . . The party of Lincoln and Liberty was transmogrified into the party of hairy-backed swamp developers and corporate shills, faith-based economists, fundamentalist bullies with Bibles, Christians of convenience, freelance racists, misanthropic frat boys, shrieking midgets of AM radio, tax cheats, nihilists in golf pants . . .

Although Keillor's characterization may be extreme, he is right that the conservative movement has turned out to be more self-consciously ideological than even political scientists had anticipated. To put it bluntly, conservatives have found ways of capitalizing on ideological passions that—according to end-of-ideologists—simply did not exist.

Politically provocative shows by Rush Limbaugh and Bill O'Reilly draw millions of listeners per week[5] (see also Barker, 2002; Brock, 2004). According to the 2004 National Election Study, 44% of respondents reported listening to political talk radio![6] Although liberals are still behind in the resumption of ideological wars, the battle has now been joined by Michael Moore, Al Franken, Arianna Huffington, Bill Maher, Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert, and Keith Olbermann; they appear to draw their inspiration from Saul Alinsky's (1971) motto that "ridicule is man's most potent weapon" (p. 128). Converse (1964) and many others have long assumed that most citizens care little about political affairs, but this assumption does not fit the current climate. There are now more than 17,000 political Web sites maintained by thousands of individual bloggers and visited by at least 25 million Americans. The top 100 political blogs attract 100,000 American adults each day.[7]

Public opinion polls show the nation to be sharply divided along ideological lines, and these lines predict political outcomes to a remarkable degree (e.g., B. Bishop, 2004). The argument that most of the population is impervious to the liberal–conservative distinction was probably never on solid empirical ground, but it seems increasingly untenable in the current (red state vs. blue state) political climate, in which formerly latent ideological conflicts are now more enthusiastically and self-consciously enacted. The fact that most people (and regions) are probably shades of purple rather than purely red or blue does not mean that the citizenry is nonideological. What it means is that people are capable of warming to ideas of the left, right, or center (Baker, 2005; Lakoff, 1996), depending on both psychological needs and social circumstances (Bonanno & Jost, in press; Jost et al., 2003a, 2003b). I return to a consideration of both dispositional and situational influences on political orientation later in the article.

Empirical evidence. The question of whether ideological commitments motivate important behavioral outcomes such as voting is one that has haunted researchers since the end of ideology was declared. Luttbeg and Gant (1985), for example, found reason to "call into question the very notion that an ideology structured in liberal/conservative terms is necessary to linking public preferences to government action" (p. 91). Similarly, Tedin (1987, pp. 63–64) examined the data from the 1972 election and was generally unimpressed by the motivational potency of ideology. At issue is whether people know enough and care enough about ideological labels such as liberalism and conservatism to use them reliably in making political decisions.

In Table 1, I have compiled the percentages of ANES respondents placing themselves at each point on an ideological scale who voted for each of the major Democratic and Republican presidential candidates between 1972 and 2004. The weighted averages, collapsing across the nine elections and over 7,500 respondents, are illustrated in Figure 1. The effects of liberalism and conservatism on voting decisions are powerful indeed; in each case the correlation exceeds .90! Responses to this single ideological self-placement item explain 85% of the statistical variance in self-reported voting behavior over the last 32

[5] See, for example, http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=17774 and http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?PageID=833.

[6] See http://www.umich.edu/~nes/studypages/download/datacenter.htm.

[7] For statistics concerning political Web sites, see http://www.comscore.com/press/release.asp?press=517, http://www.websense.com/global/en/PressRoom/PressReleases/PressReleaseDetail/?Release=041018730, and http://michellemalkin.com/archives/001623.htm.

Table 1
Percentages of American National Election Studies Survey Respondents Placing Themselves at Each Point on an Ideological Scale Who Voted for Democratic and Republican Candidates in U.S. Presidential Elections, 1972–2004

Year and candidates	Extremely liberal (1)	Liberal (2)	Slightly liberal (3)	Moderate (4)	Slightly conservative (5)	Conservative (6)	Extremely conservative (7)
1972							
McGovern	83	83	56	31	15	10	5
Nixon	17	17	44	68	84	89	90
1976							
Carter	82	81	69	51	25	19	14
Ford	12	15	24	46	70	78	81
1980							
Carter	71	71	49	35	27	15	27
Reagan	7	6	33	54	62	81	73
1984							
Mondale	91	73	66	44	22	14	23
Reagan	9	25	32	54	76	86	77
1988							
Dukakis	90	86	75	51	33	14	17
Bush	5	11	23	48	67	86	80
1992							
Clinton	86	82	60	51	30	15	29
Bush	0	3	17	29	46	64	65
1996							
Clinton	64	92	82	58	32	16	27
Dole	0	1	9	30	56	80	70
2000							
Gore	70	84	75	61	33	13	9
Bush	0	12	17	37	62	86	87
2004							
Kerry	89	92	85	54	26	11	7
Bush	0	6	13	42	70	87	93
Unweighted average, 1972–2004							
Democrat	80.7	82.7	68.6	48.4	27.0	14.1	17.5
Republican	5.4	10.7	23.6	45.3	65.9	72.0	79.6

Note. Data are from the American National Election Studies (see http://www.umich.edu/~nes/studypages/download/datacenter.htm).

years.[8] Approximately 80% of respondents who described themselves as "liberal" or "extremely liberal" reported voting for Democratic candidates, and 80% of respondents who described themselves as "conservative" or "extremely conservative" voted for Republican candidates. I find it difficult to think of another survey question in the entire social and behavioral sciences that is as useful and parsimonious as the liberalism–conservatism self-placement item for predicting any outcome that is as important as voting behavior.

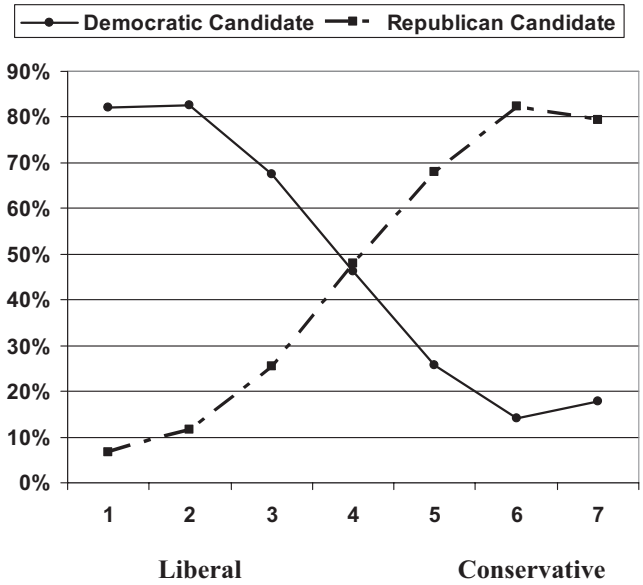
Are There Differences in Content Between Liberalism and Conservatism?

One of the assumptions of the end-of-ideologists and their followers is that the substantive ideological differences between the left and the right are few and far between (Aron, 1957/1968; Giddens, 1998; Lasch, 1991; Lipset, 1960; Shils, 1955/1968b). Shils (1954), for example, mocked the left–right distinction as "rickety," "spurious," and "obsolete" (pp. 27–28). Lipset (1960) recounted a 1955 conference in Milan that had disappointed its ideologically heterogeneous audience by degenerating into a hopeless consensus:

> The socialists no longer advocated socialism; they were as concerned as the conservatives with the danger of an all-powerful state. The ideological issues dividing left and right had been

[8] In separate general linear models, ideological self-placement was a powerful predictor of self-reported voting for both Democratic, $F(1, 61) = 352.89$, $p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .85$, and Republican, $F(1, 61) = 424.19$, $p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .87$, candidates. Additional analyses yielded no significant interactions between ideological self-placement and election year, indicating that ideology played a consistently strong role between 1962 and 2004.

Figure 1
Effects of Ideological Self-Placement on Voting Behavior, 1972–2004



Note. Data are weighted average percentages of American National Election Studies survey respondents placing themselves at each point on an ideological scale who voted for Democratic and Republican presidential candidates, aggregated across presidential election years between 1972 and 2004 (N = 7,504). Labels for the liberal–conservative self-placement scale were as follows: 1 = *extremely liberal*; 2 = *liberal*; 3 = *slightly liberal*; 4 = *moderate/middle of the road*; 5 = *slightly conservative*; 6 = *conservative*; and 7 = *extremely conservative*. The data are from the American National Election Studies at http://www.umich.edu/~nes/studypages/download/datacenter.htm

reduced to a little more or a little less government ownership and economic planning. No one seemed to believe that it really made much difference which political party controlled the domestic policies of individual nations. (pp. 404–405)

An essential part of the end-of-ideology thesis was that everything of value in Marxism had already been incorporated into Western democratic societies and that there was no continuing need for leftist economic or cultural critique (Bell, 1960, 1988). Aron (1957/1968, p. 31), for example, argued that "Western 'capitalist' society today comprises a multitude of socialist institutions," and Shils (1958, p. 456) claimed that the "more valid aspirations of the older humanitarian elements which were absorbed into Marxism have been more or less fulfilled in capitalist countries." Lipset (1960, p. 406) went even further, celebrating the fact that "the fundamental political problems of the industrial revolution have been solved: the workers have achieved industrial and political citizenship; the conservatives have accepted the welfare state."

Current political realities. One need only point to a few well-known facts about political economy to cast doubt on the notion that the left and right have resolved their fiscal disputes in the four or five decades since these statements were made. In 1980, when Ronald Reagan was elected president, corporate CEOs earned approximately 40 times the salary of the average worker; recent estimates place the figure at nearly 500 to 1 (Crystal, 2002). As of the late 1990s, the richest 1% of Americans controlled almost half of the country's total financial wealth, and the top 20% possessed 94% of the nation's net wealth (Wolff, 1996). More than 30 million Americans today live below the poverty line, and the combined net worth of the 400 wealthiest Americans exceeds 1 trillion dollars. By nearly every metric—including the Gini index of income concentration—the distribution of wealth in American society has grown increasingly skewed in favor of the wealthy (e.g., Weinberg, 2002). Income inequality increased most sharply during the 1980s and 1990s in those societies that most aggressively pursued "neoliberal" (i.e., free market) economic policies, especially the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand (Weeks, 2005). These statistics (and many more) cast doubt on the claim that Western capitalist institutions in general have internalized fundamental socialist principles, as the end-of-ideologists suggested.

The notion that "conservatives have accepted the welfare state" is particularly hard to accept given how strenuously the governments of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan worked to reduce or eliminate welfare and social services, albeit with mixed success. Pierson (1994) wrote,

In many countries a conservative resurgence accompanied the economic turmoil of the late 1970s. Conservative parties gained strength, and within these parties leadership shifted to those most critical of the postwar consensus on social and economic policy. These newly ascendant conservatives viewed the welfare state as a large part of the problem. They argued that social programs generated massive inefficiencies, and that financing them required incentive-sapping levels of taxation and inflationary budget deficits. In short, conservatives viewed retrenchment not as a necessary evil but as a necessary good. (p. 1)

Welfare reform was a major objective of Newt Gingrich's Republican Revolution of 1994 and the Contract with America that followed. In 2005, President Bush conducted a speaking tour (called "60 Stops in 60 Days") aimed at persuading the public to privatize the liberal social security system established by Franklin D. Roosevelt 70 years earlier.

Empirical evidence. Studies show that there are substantial differences in the beliefs and values of liberals and conservatives. The largest and most consistent differences concern core issues of resistance to change and attitudes toward equality. For example, people who call themselves conservatives hold significantly more favorable attitudes than liberals toward traditional cultural and "family values," including religious forms of morality (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; Haidt & Graham, in press; Kerlinger, 1984; Lakoff, 1996). They are also more likely to support conventional authority figures and to oppose activists who are seeking to change the status quo, especially if change is toward greater egalitarianism (e.g., Altemeyer, 1988; Conover & Feldman, 1981; Erikson et al., 1988; Evans et al., 1996).

People who identify themselves as liberals place a higher priority on achieving social and economic equality

through policies such as welfare, social security, and affirmative action (Evans et al., 1996; Feldman, 1988; Glaser, 2005; Graetz & Shapiro, 2005; Jacoby, 1991; Noelle-Neumann, 1998; Pierson, 1994). They are also significantly less likely to hold prejudicial attitudes—at a conscious or unconscious level—toward racial minorities, homosexuals, women, and members of other disadvantaged groups (Cunningham, Nezlek, & Banaji, 2004; Duckitt, 2001; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996; Whitley, 1999). Although a full consideration of the numerous peripheral (as well as core) differences between the left and the right is well beyond the scope of this article, even a cursory glance at recent public opinion research provides reason enough to reject the end-of-ideology thesis that meaningful ideological differences have disappeared in the aftermath of World War II (e.g., Erikson et al., 1988; Feldman, 1988, 2003; Jacoby, 1991; Kerlinger, 1984; Knight, 1990; McClosky & Zaller, 1984).

Are There Differences in Psychological Processes Underlying Liberalism and Conservatism?

Adorno et al.'s (1950) *The Authoritarian Personality* is one of the most influential—and also one of the most badly caricatured—books in the history of social science. One Web site claims that Adorno and colleagues "attacked the 'authoritarian character' of the American nuclear family, the 'problem' of the American people's belief in a transcendent monotheistic God, the underlying 'fascist' character of all forms of American patriotism, and American culture's excessive reliance on science, reason, and 'abstract ideas.'" Another lists it as one of the "most harmful" books of the last two centuries.[9] Roiser and Willig (2002) noted that even in academic circles, "*The Authoritarian Personality* has been the victim of several determined attempts at psychological and political assassinations" (p. 89). Soon after the book's publication, Shils (1954) accused the authors of a "narrowness of political imagination" and of "holding fast to a deforming intellectual tradition" (p. 31). More recently, Martin (2001) pronounced it "the most deeply flawed work of prominence in political psychology" (p. 1) and argued for a "categorical dismissal" of it (p. 24).

The methodological problems associated with research on authoritarianism as a personality syndrome (including the problem of acquiescence and other response biases) were significant, but they have been addressed by Altemeyer (1988, 1998) and many others (see Jost et al., 2003a, for a review). There have also been recurrent theoretical and ideological criticisms of the book's central thesis, which is that character rigidity and feelings of threat are related to the holding of intolerant, right-wing opinions that were dubbed "pseudo-conservative." Critics have claimed that left-wingers can be every bit as dogmatic and rigid as right-wingers. Shils (1954) and Eysenck (1954/1999), for example, emphasized that left-wing extremists (i.e., Communists), especially in the Soviet Union, resembled right-wing extremists (i.e., Fascists) in certain respects (e.g., intolerance of ambiguity and tough-mindedness, respectively). Others have pointed out (quite correctly) that left-wing movements have sometimes embraced authoritarian themes and methods. But these historical observations do not establish that leftists and rightists are *equally* dogmatic, rigid, and closed-minded in the general population. Nevertheless, these examples have sometimes been used to claim that there are no important or enduring psychological differences between liberals and conservatives (e.g., Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; but see Jost et al., 2003b).

Current political realities. There are signs that Adorno et al.'s (1950) work is gaining new appreciation, at least in part because of the current political climate (e.g., Lavine et al., 2005; Roiser & Willig, 2002; Stenner, 2005). Many of the fundamental ideas of the theory of right-wing authoritarianism have resurfaced in contemporary accounts of the "culture wars." Lakoff (1996), for instance, has analyzed differences in political metaphors and observed that whereas conservatives adhere to a "strict father" model of moral discipline, liberals prefer a "nurturing parent" frame. Baker (2005), too, has noted that increasing "absolutism" has accompanied the rise in popularity of American conservatism (pp. 66–71). In an article published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Wolfe (2005) wrote,

> [W]hen I attended graduate school in the 1960s, *The Authoritarian Personality* was treated as a social-science version of the Edsel, a case study of how to do everything wrong. . . . Yet, despite its flaws, *The Authoritarian Personality* deserves a re-evaluation. In many ways, it is more relevant now than it was in 1950 . . . [M]any of the prominent politicians successful in today's conservative political environment adhere to a distinct style of politics that the authors of *The Authoritarian Personality* anticipated.

John Dean (2006), the former Nixon attorney, has similarly argued that "conservatism has been co-opted by authoritarians, a most dangerous type of political animal" (p. xxxix). Wolfe, Dean, and others have noted that rather than responding in kind, liberals have generally eschewed dogmatic reactions to 9/11 and its political aftermath. All of this is consistent with the notion that there are indeed significant differences of cognitive and motivational style that characterize people who are drawn to liberal versus conservative belief systems, much as Adorno and his colleagues (1950) hypothesized.

Empirical evidence. There is now sufficient evidence to conclude that Adorno et al. (1950) were correct that conservatives are, on average, more rigid and closed-minded than liberals. My colleagues and I published a meta-analysis that identified several psychological variables that predicted, to varying degrees, adherence to politically conservative (vs. liberal) opinions (Jost et al., 2003a, 2003b). The original studies, which were conducted over a 44-year period that included the end-of-ideology era, made use of 88 research samples involving 22,818 individual cases and were carried out in 12 different countries: Australia, Canada, England, Germany, Israel, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, Scotland, South Africa, Sweden, and the United States. The results, which are summarized in Table 2, show

[9] See http://www.schillerinstitute.org/strategic/2004/AFF.html and http://www.humanevents.com/sarticle.php?id = 7591, respectively.

Table 2
Effect Size Estimates and Confidence Intervals for Relations Between Psychological Variables and Ideological Orientation

Psychological variable	Effect size	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	No. of tests	Countries tested	Total (unique) *N*
Fear of death/mortality salience	.50	.43	.57	8	USA, Israel	479
System instability/threat	.47	.46	.49	9	USA	10,639
Dogmatism/ambiguity intolerance	.34	.30	.37	20	USA, Israel, England, Sweden	2,173
Openness to experience	−.32	−.28	−.35	21	USA, Australia	2,606
Uncertainty avoidance	.27	.21	.34	13	USA, Scotland, East Germany	763
Needs for order/structure/closure	.26	.22	.29	20	USA, Germany, Poland, Italy, Canada, New Zealand	2,548
Integrative complexity	−.20	−.13	−.26	21	USA, England, Sweden, Canada	879
Fear of threat and loss	.18	.15	.22	22	USA, England, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa	3,371
Self-esteem	−.09	−.04	−.13	17	USA, Canada, New Zealand	1,558

Note. Effect size estimates are weighted mean *r*s. All effect sizes are statistically reliable, $p < .001$. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit (absolute value); UL = upper limit (absolute value). Ideological orientation is coded so that higher numbers are associated with conservatism and lower numbers with liberalism. Total (unique) *N* refers to both individual participants and cases (including, with regard to system instability/threat, years). Data are from Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway (2003a, 2003b).

a clear tendency for conservatives to score higher on measures of dogmatism, intolerance of ambiguity, needs for order, structure, and closure and to be lower in openness to experience and integrative complexity than moderates and liberals. Several studies demonstrate that in a variety of perceptual and aesthetic domains, conservatism is associated with preferences for relatively simple, unambiguous, and familiar stimuli, whether they are paintings, poems, or songs (see also Wilson, 1973).

There are other psychological differences between liberals and conservatives as well. Conservatives are, on average, more likely than liberals to perceive the world as a dangerous place (Altemeyer, 1998; Duckitt, 2001) and to fear crime, terrorism, and death (e.g., Jost et al., 2003a; Wilson, 1973). They are also more likely to make purely internal attributions for the causes of others' behaviors (e.g., Skitka, Mullen, Griffin, Hutchinson, & Chamberlin, 2002) and to engage in moral condemnation of others, especially in sexual domains (Haidt & Hersh, 2001). As Adorno et al. (1950) noted long ago, conservatives tend to hold more prejudicial attitudes than liberals toward members of deviant or stigmatized groups, at least in part because of chronically elevated levels of threat and rigidity (e.g., Altemeyer, 1988, 1998; Cunningham et al., 2004; Duckitt, 2001; Sidanius et al., 1996; Whitley, 1999).

What about authoritarianism of the left? Are extremists of the left and right equally likely to be closed-minded? Some studies, especially those comparing multiple political parties in Europe, allow researchers to pit the (linear) rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis against the (quadratic) extremity hypothesis that increasing ideological extremity in either direction (left or right) should be associated with increased dogmatism and rigidity. The existing data provide very consistent support for the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis, no support for the extremity hypothesis in isolation, and some support for the notion that both linear and quadratic effects are present in combination (see Jost et al., 2003b, pp. 388–390). In summary, then, much evidence upholds the Adorno et al. (1950) rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis (see Table 2) and contradicts persistent claims that liberals and conservatives are *equally* rigid and dogmatic (e.g., Greenberg & Jonas, 2003). The important point is not that Adorno and colleagues bested their critics; it is that psychologists are finally returning to the kinds of questions raised by *The Authoritarian Personality* after many years of neglect during the end-of-ideology era.

An Emerging Psychological Paradigm for the Study of Ideology

The reticence of sociologists and political scientists to take ideology seriously in recent decades has created opportunities for psychologists not only to describe ideological differences in theory but also to explain them in practice. Social and personality psychologists have made relatively rapid progress in identifying a set of situational and dispositional factors that are linked to the motivational underpinnings of political orientation. There is now the possibility of explaining ideological differences between right and left in terms of underlying psychological needs for stability versus change, order versus complexity, familiarity versus novelty, conformity versus creativity, and loyalty versus rebellion. These and other dimensions of personal and social significance are the basic building blocks of an emerging psychological paradigm that has already begun to shed light on why ideology (and, unfortunately, ideological conflict) are always likely to be with us.

Situational Factors

As former President Bill Clinton observed in a 2003 interview, "The psychological setting after 9/11 helped [conservatives]" because "we all wanted to see things in black and white for a while" (Tomasky, 2003, p. 29). Much as the Great Depression precipitated rightward shifts in Germany, Italy, Spain, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Japan, and other nations, heightened perceptions of uncertainty and threat in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, generally increased the appeal of conservative leaders and opinions (see, e.g., Jones, 2003). My colleagues and I found that the two largest effect sizes obtained in our meta-analysis of psychological predictors of conservatism were system threat and fear of death (see Table 2), both of which were elicited by the events of 9/11 (Jost et al., 2003a, 2003b).

Since the publication of our meta-analysis, several additional studies have demonstrated that reminders of death and terrorism increase the attractiveness of conservative leaders and opinions. Willer (2004), for instance, conducted time-series analyses and showed that President Bush's approval ratings increased each time his administration raised the terror alert levels between 2001 and 2004. Landau et al. (2004) demonstrated that subliminal and supraliminal 9/11 and death primes led college students (a relatively liberal population) to show increased support for President Bush and his counterterrorism policies and decreased support for the liberal challenger John Kerry. These effects were replicated by Cohen et al. (2005) immediately prior to the Bush–Kerry election in 2004. A Spanish study found that in the aftermath of the Madrid terrorist attacks of March 11, 2004, survey respondents scored higher on measures of authoritarianism and prejudice and were more likely to endorse conservative values and less likely to endorse liberal values, compared with baseline levels calculated prior to the attacks (Echebarria & Fernández, 2006).

An experimental study by Jost, Fitzsimons, and Kay (2004) demonstrated that priming people with images evoking death (e.g., images of a funeral hearse, a "Dead End" street sign, and a chalk outline of a human body) led liberals and moderates as well as conservatives to more strongly endorse politically conservative opinions on issues such as taxation, same-sex marriage, and stem cell research, compared with a standard control condition in which participants were primed with images evoking pain (e.g., a dentist's chair, a bandaged arm, and a bee sting removal). This finding is particularly important because it demonstrates that death reminders increase support for conservative *opinions* as well as leaders and therefore rules out charismatic leadership as an alternative explanation for the results (see Cohen et al., 2005). The results of these post–9/11 studies, especially when taken in conjunction, appear to overturn an earlier conclusion—based primarily on a nonsignificant result obtained by Greenberg et al. (1992, p. 214)—that mortality salience would lead liberals to cling more strongly to liberal beliefs and values (see also Greenberg & Jonas, 2003).

A recently conducted study of the political attitudes of World Trade Center survivors provides further support for the notion that threat precipitates "conservative shift" even among people who were not initially conservative (Bonanno & Jost, in press). Survivors in New York City were asked 18 months after 9/11 whether they had grown "more liberal, more conservative, or stayed the same" since the terrorist attacks. Results revealed that 38% of the sample overall reported that they had become more conservative in the 18 months following 9/11, which was almost *three times* as many people (13%) who reported that they had grown more liberal, $\chi^2(1, N = 45) = 5.26$, $p < .05$. Conservative shifts were more common than liberal shifts not only among Republicans (50% vs. 0%) but also among Independents (50% vs. 0%) and Democrats (35% vs. 23%) and even among people who reported voting for Clinton in 1992 (32% vs. 16%) and 1996 (34% vs. 16%) and Gore in 2000 (40% vs. 12%). There was no evidence in this sample, however, that embracing conservatism following 9/11 was associated with improved well-being as measured either in terms of survivors' mental health symptoms or peer ratings of their psychological adjustment. On the contrary, chronic symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder and depression (measured at 7 months and again at 18 months after 9/11) were positively correlated with political conservatism, conservative shift, and especially right-wing authoritarianism (see Table 3), suggesting that, as Adorno et al. (1950) proposed, there may be long-term (as well as short-term) differences in distress and coping style that covary with political orientation.

Dispositional Factors

In addition to situational factors, there is strong evidence that chronic dispositional factors contribute to liberal versus conservative political orientations. With respect to the Big Five taxonomy of personality traits, Carney, Jost, Gosling, Niederhoffer, and Potter (2006) found that two of the five traits are consistently linked to political orientation in the United States, and the other three are not (see also Stenner, 2005, pp. 171–172). Carney et al.'s results, aggregated across five samples involving a total of 19,248 research participants, are summarized in Figure 2. Consistent with Tomkins's (1963) observation that leftists are more motivated by excitement seeking, novelty, and creativity for its own sake, liberals tend to score significantly higher than do conservatives on self-report questionnaire items tapping openness to new experiences (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003; McCrae, 1996). In one of Carney et al.'s five samples, it was possible to inspect correlations between individuals' scores on specific facets of the NEO Personality Inventory–Revised and ideological self-placement on a liberalism–conservatism scale ($n = 85$). Results revealed that all six of the openness facets were associated with liberalism rather than conservatism: openness values ($r = -.48$), aesthetics ($r = -.32$), actions ($r = -.27$), ideas ($r = -.24$), feelings ($r = -.24$), and fantasy ($r =$

Table 3
Correlations Between Mental Health Symptoms and Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Political Conservatism, and Conservative Shift in a Sample of World Trade Center Survivors

Symptoms following 9/11	Right-wing authoritarianism	Liberalism–conservatism	Conservative shift
Posttraumatic stress disorder (7 months)	.46***	.29*	.25*
Posttraumatic stress disorder (18 months)	.38**	.29*	.32*
Depression (7 months)	.46***	.29*	.28*
Depression (18 months)	.26*	.15	.31*

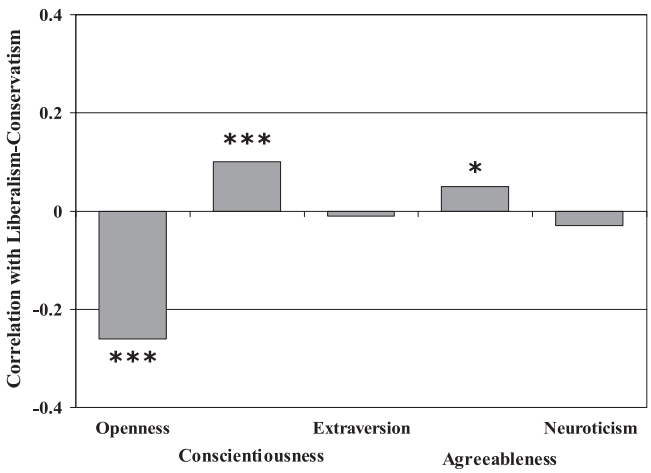
Note. Entries are bivariate correlations for analyses involving a sample of World Trade Center survivors ($N = 45$). Mental health symptoms were measured using self-report instruments on two occasions: once at 7 months and once at 18 months post–9/11. Ideological variables were measured once at 18 months post–9/11. Right-wing authoritarianism was measured with 6 items drawn from Altemeyer's (1988) scale. Liberalism–conservatism was measured with a single-item 7-point ideological self-placement scale, with higher numbers indicating more conservatism and lower numbers indicating more liberalism. Conservative shift was a dichotomous variable that distinguished participants who reported that they had "become more conservative" ($n = 17$) in terms of political attitudes in the 18 months following 9/11 from participants who reported that they did not ($n = 28$). One-tailed tests were used to assess directional hypotheses because of the small sample size. Data are from Bonanno and Jost (in press).
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

−.19).[10] These findings add to a growing body of evidence suggesting that open-mindedness/closed-mindedness is a fundamental psychological variable that helps us to understand ideological asymmetries between the left and the right (Jost et al., 2003a, 2003b; Kruglanski, 2004).

Tomkins (1963) was also correct in observing that conservatives are more motivated than liberals by norm attainment, rule following, and orderliness. In particular, Carney et al. (2006) found that conservatives scored somewhat higher than liberals on the Big Five dimension of conscientiousness (see Figure 2), although reliable differences emerged for only two of the facets, achievement-striving ($r = .24$) and order ($r = .21$). These results, too, are consistent with Jost et al.'s (2003a) meta-analytic finding that conservatism is positively associated with personal needs for order, structure, and closure (see Table 2). There is even some behavioral evidence suggesting that conservatives' living and working spaces may be better organized and tidier, on average, than those of liberals! My colleagues and I discovered, for example, that the bedrooms of conservatives were significantly more likely to contain organizational supplies such as calendars, postage stamps, and laundry baskets, whereas the bedrooms of liberals were more likely to contain art supplies, books, CDs, maps, and travel documents (see Table 4). Results such as these imply that left–right ideological differences permeate nearly every aspect of our public and private lives. As a general rule, liberals are more open-minded in their pursuit of creativity, novelty, and diversity, whereas conservatives tend to pursue lives that are more orderly, conventional, and better organized (see Carney et al., 2006).

A longitudinal study conducted by Block and Block (in press) suggests that personality differences between liberals and conservatives may begin early in childhood, long before people define themselves in terms of political orientation. They found that preschool children who were described by their teachers as energetic, emotionally ex-

Figure 2
Correlations Between Big Five Personality Scores and Ideological Self-Placement of Individuals



Note. Data are from Carney, Jost, Gosling, Niederhoffer, and Potter (2006, Study 1). Effect size estimates are weighted mean correlations (*rs*), aggregating results across five samples (total $N = 19{,}248$). Each Big Five dimension was correlated with ideological self-placement as measured using a single-item 5-point ideological self-placement scale, with higher numbers indicating more conservatism and lower numbers indicating more liberalism. Asterisks are used to denote those personality dimensions that were significant correlates in the meta-analytic calculation: * $p < .05$ (two-tailed).*** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

[10] Although Carney et al. (2006) found that conservatives scored slightly higher than liberals on agreeableness in the two largest samples contributing to the data summarized in Figure 2 (but not in the other three samples), there was also some evidence that liberals scored higher than conservatives on the tender-mindedness facet of the agreeableness subscale ($r = -.27$). This latter result (and others summarized in Table 2) casts doubt on Eysenck's (1954/1999) suggestion that tough-mindedness/tender-mindedness is a dimension of personality that is truly orthogonal to political orientation.

Table 4
Correlations Between Bedroom Cues and Ideological Self-Placement of Occupant

Bedroom cue	Liberalism-conservatism
Event calendar	.31***
Postage stamps	.30**
Presence of string/thread	.29**
Iron and/or ironing board	.28**
Laundry basket	.25**
General calendar	.23*
Any type of flag (including U.S. flag)	.23*
Alcohol bottles/containers	.23*
U.S. flag	.21*
Well-lit (vs. dark)	.20*
Organized (vs. disorganized) stationery	.18*
Fresh (vs. stale)	.17†
Neat (vs. messy)	.16†
Clean (vs. dirty)	.15†
Varied (vs. homogeneous) CDs	−.19*
Books about travel	−.21*
Classic rock CDs	−.22*
Modern rock CDs	−.22*
Reggae music CDs	−.22*
Cultural memorabilia (e.g., trinkets from vacation)	−.22*
Tickets for/from travel	−.22*
Many (vs. few) CDs	−.23*
Books about ethnic matters	−.24*
Folk music CDs	−.24*
Movie tickets	−.25**
Books about feminist topics	−.25**
International maps (maps of countries other than the United States)	−.25**
Many (vs. few) books	−.25**
Many (vs. few) items of stationery	−.26**
World music CDs	−.26**
Art supplies	−.27**
Variety of music	−.27**
Varied (vs. homogeneous) books	−.34***

Note. Entries are bivariate correlations for analyses involving a sample of college students and recent graduates ($N = 83$). Room cues were coded by research assistants who were unaware of the occupants' political orientation, which was measured separately using a single-item 5-point ideological self-placement scale, with higher numbers indicating more conservatism and lower numbers indicating more liberalism. One-tailed tests were used to assess directional hypotheses because of the small sample size. Data are from Carney, Jost, Gosling, Niederhoffer, and Potter (2006, Study 4).
† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

pressive, gregarious, self-reliant, resilient, and impulsive were more likely to identify themselves as politically liberal as adults. Children who were seen by teachers as relatively inhibited, indecisive, fearful, rigid, vulnerable, and overcontrolled were more likely to identify themselves as conservative adults. Although it would be impossible to control for all of the factors that could influence both personality and political orientation over a 20-year period, the Block and Block findings largely mirror adult personality differences (e.g., Jost et al., 2003a; Wilson, 1973) and suggest that personality predispositions and interpersonal relationships may affect one's ideological preferences later in life.

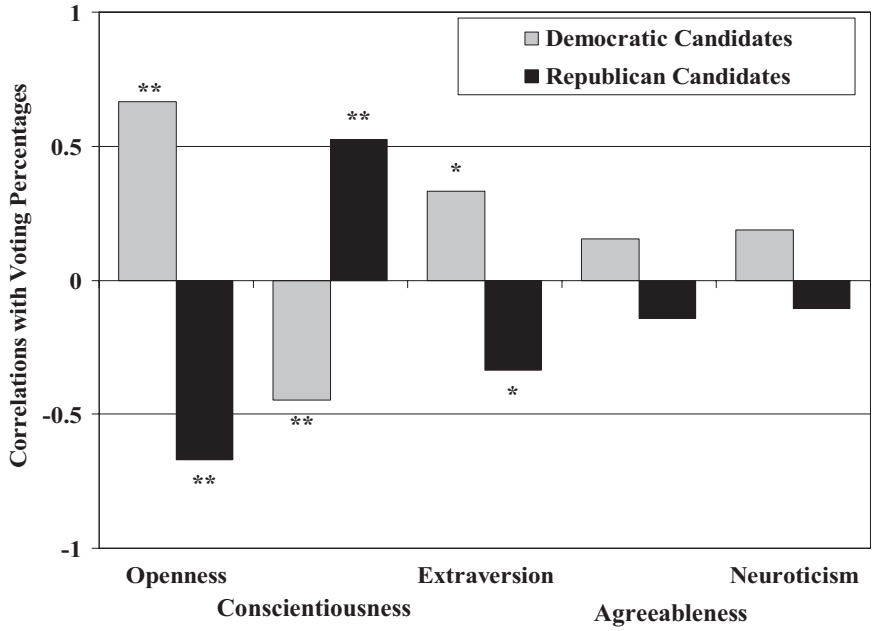
Studies comparing the social and political attitudes of monozygotic and dizygotic twins reared apart reveal that identical twins have more similar attitudes than fraternal twins (e.g., Alford, Funk, & Hibbing, 2005; Bouchard, Segal, Tellegen, & Krueger, 2003). This research suggests that there is a substantial heritable component of political attitudes, although it does not mean that there is a gene for political orientation per se. A more likely explanation is that there are basic cognitive and motivational predispositions, including orientations toward uncertainty and threat (e.g., Block & Block, in press; Jost et al., 2003a, 2003b; Wilson, 1973), and that these predispositions have a heritable component and lead to preferences for liberal versus conservative ideas. It is therefore increasingly plausible that differences in underlying psychological characteristics (or processes) will eventually help to explain differences between the left and the right at the level of ideological content (i.e., resistance to change and acceptance of inequality).

Implications for Understanding the Red-State/Blue-State Divide

Research on psychological variables underlying political ideology has led to a fruitful analysis of the current political divide between "red states" and "blue states" in terms of differences in "regional personality." Specifically, my colleagues and I theorized that differences in modal personality styles at the state level could influence ideological commitments and therefore voting patterns in at least two ways (Rentfrow, Jost, Gosling, & Potter, 2006). First, there is the possibility of self-selection in migration patterns. People may be more likely to move to places where others tend to share their personality characteristics and political values; for instance, those who are especially high on openness may disproportionately relocate to major coastal or urban centers that are high on stimulation and cultural diversity and that also tend to be very liberal. Second, there is the prospect of social influence through interaction, so that people are affected by their neighbors' traits and political orientations over time, thereby increasing the local concentration of certain personality types and political ideologies.

To investigate patterns of regional ideology, my colleagues and I conducted an Internet survey in which we obtained Big Five personality scores from hundreds of thousands of American respondents and analyzed their data on a state-by-state basis (Rentfrow et al., 2006). We used these state-level personality estimates to predict the percentage of votes for Democratic versus Republican candidates in the 1996–2004 presidential elections on the assumption that voting behavior is related to ideology (see Table 1). Consistent with results at the individual level of analysis (e.g., Carney et al., 2006; McCrae, 1996), openness to new experiences was the

Figure 3
Statewide Big Five Personality Scores Predict Voting Patterns in U.S. Presidential Elections, 1996–2004



Note. Data are from Rentfrow, Jost, Gosling, and Potter (2006). Entries are standardized regression coefficients for a model in which state-level means for all Big Five dimensions were used simultaneously to predict the percentage of the statewide vote cast for Democratic (Clinton, Gore, and Kerry) and Republican (Dole and Bush) candidates, aggregating across the 1996, 2000, and 2004 presidential elections. Asterisks are used to denote those regional personality dimensions that emerged as significant predictors in all three elections: * $p < .05$ (two-tailed). ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

strongest regional personality predictor of the percentage of the statewide vote cast for Democratic versus Republican candidates in the three most recent presidential elections (see Figure 3). That is, states with higher mean-level openness scores were significantly more likely to have cast votes for Clinton, Gore, and Kerry in these elections and significantly less likely to have cast votes for Dole or Bush. Remarkably, state-level openness remained a significant predictor even after we adjusted for demographic and other political variables, including population density, percentage of minority population, average income, voter turnout, and percentage of the vote cast for the same-party candidate in the previous election (see Rentfrow et al., 2006).

Although the effect sizes were not quite as large, conscientiousness also proved to be a reasonably strong and unique predictor of voting patterns. States that were higher in mean-level conscientiousness were significantly more likely to have cast votes for Dole and Bush in the last three elections and less likely to have cast votes for Clinton, Gore, or Kerry (see Figure 3). There was also some evidence that states that were higher in mean-level extraversion were more likely to favor liberal over conservative candidates, but these results should be interpreted with caution because they are contrary to those obtained by Caprara, Barbaranelli, Consiglio, Picconi, and Zimbardo (2003) in Italy. Altogether, we found that the Big Five dimensions accounted for 40% of the statistical variance in voting percentages across the three elections (Rentfrow et al., 2006). These results suggest that a psychological analysis, in addition to the kinds of demographic and institutional analyses offered by sociologists and political scientists (Erikson, Wright, & McIver, 1993), may be extremely useful for understanding the American political divide.

Concluding Remarks

The late Italian political theorist Norberto Bobbio (1996) pointed out that at one time or another it was in the political interest of nearly everyone to deny the enduring relevance of ideology insofar as "undermining the left/right distinction becomes an obvious expedient for hiding one's own weakness" (p. 14). In other words, blurring ideological boundaries is a rhetorical strategy that helps a sidelined minority party to refashion its image. For example, third-party candidate Ralph Nader claimed[11] during the 2000 political campaign that "there are few major differences" between the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates, but he has had to explain and justify this remark in

[11] See http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C03EFD8143FF931A2575BC0A9669C8B63.

the wake of 9/11, the Bush presidency, and a controversial military occupation of Iraq.[12]

The end-of-ideology thesis originated with neoconservatives such as Bell (1960), Shils (1955/1968b), and Fukuyama (1996/2006b); their work helped to marginalize the radical left and to give neoconservatives a fresh start. D'Souza (1995) wielded the end-of-ideology excuse to distance conservative policies from unpopular legacies such as racism. Soon thereafter, it was liberals who, following the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe, abandoned their commitment to robust social welfare programs and professed the need for a "third way" (Giddens, 1998) to defeat the heirs of Thatcher and Reagan. The strategy worked for Bill Clinton and Tony Blair—but arguably at the cost of taking historically leftist concerns such as exploitation, egalitarianism, and social and economic justice off the political bargaining table.

Lefebvre (1968) was among the first to diagnose the short-sighted, obfuscatory, and (ironically) ideological nature of the end-of-ideology thesis (see also Mills, 1960/1968). He noted that "extreme ideologizing is accompanied by a certain conviction that the 'end of ideology' has been reached" (p. 87) and predicted that "ideology is not so easily eliminated; to the contrary, it is marked by sudden flare-ups and makes surprising comebacks" (p. 87). The evidence that I have assembled in this article suggest that Lefebvre was right. There is a degree of political division in the United States and elsewhere that would have been unfathomable to the end-of-ideologists, and it shows no signs of abating. Even Fukuyama (2006a), one of the chief architects of the neoconservative movement, has acknowledged that "the legacy of the Bush first-term foreign policy and its neo-conservative supporters has been so polarizing that it is going to be hard to appropriately balance American ideals and interests in the coming years" (p. 67).

It is probably no coincidence that the ideological struggle was renewed by the right wing rather than the left wing. Tedin (1987) reported data from 1980 indicating that more than three times as many conservatives as liberals satisfied Converse's (1964) criteria for being true "ideologues." And, as we have seen, a large body of evidence supports the (asymmetrical) rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis over the (symmetrical) ideologue-as-extremist hypothesis (Jost et al., 2003a, 2003b). Research suggests that conservatives are often prone to expedient, closed-minded, and authoritarian solutions (e.g., Altemeyer, 1988, 1998; Kruglanski, 2004; Sidanius et al., 1996). Liberals, on the other hand, may be too quick to defy authority, flout conventions, and slay the "sacred cows" of others (e.g., see Haidt & Graham, in press). There are almost surely necessary, self-correcting historical swings in both left-wing and right-wing directions, as Tomkins (1965) noted in the epigraph I selected for this article. It may well be that the future of humanity depends on each side's ability to learn from and avoid repeating past mistakes.

My own conclusion is similar to that of Lane (1962) and Kerlinger (1984), which is that 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. As I have shown, millions of Americans now actively seek out ideologically charged talk radio, televised news programs, and political blog sites. Between two thirds and three quarters of the American population currently locate their political attitudes on a liberalism–conservatism dimension, and I have shown that these attitudes do reliably predict voting intentions and many other important outcomes, including beliefs, opinions, values, traits, behaviors, and perhaps even mental health characteristics. Many other discoveries concerning the causes and consequences of left–right ideological differences await psychologists and other social and behavioral scientists but only if we accept that the differences exist and can be studied scientifically.

In looking back on the end-of-ideology thesis that he helped to promulgate, Shils (1968a) himself admitted that "the potentiality for ideology seems to be a permanent part of the human constitution" (p. 75). It is a good thing, then, that psychologists have finally returned to the topic after so many years of neglect. There are many important questions for which we lack solid empirical answers, in large part because of "end of ideology" pronouncements. In this article, I have taken a distinctively psychological approach to political ideology, highlighting the social, cognitive, and motivational underpinnings of liberalism and conservatism; similarly fruitful analyses could be undertaken with respect to religious and other belief systems as well. Because ideologies and other belief systems grow out of an attempt to satisfy the epistemic, existential, and relational needs of our species, it may be ascertained that ideology is a "natural" part of our psychological functioning and will always be present in one form or another. Core ideological beliefs concerning attitudes toward equality and traditionalism possess relatively enduring dispositional and situational antecedents, and they exert at least some degree of influence or constraint over the individual's other thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. There is reason to assume that human beings have required and will continue to require the characteristics that are associated with the political left as well as the political right. We need tradition, order, structure, closure, discipline, and conscientiousness, to be sure, but if the human race is to continue to survive new challenges, we will also just as surely need creativity, curiosity, tolerance, diversity, and open-mindedness.

[12] See, for example, Remnick (2006, p. 48) and http://www.seacoastonline.com/2000news/7_12_e1.htm. The point here is not to suggest that there are *no* similarities between Democrats and Republicans (or, more precisely, between liberals and conservatives), but that there *are* substantial political and psychological differences.

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