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More than Ideology: Conservative–Liberal Identity and Receptivity to Political Cues

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Abstract To many commentators and social scientists, Americans' stances on political issues are to an important extent driven by an underlying conservative–liberal ideological dimension. Self-identification as conservative vs. liberal is regarded as a marker of this dimension. However, past research has not thoroughly distinguished between ideological identity (a self-categorization) and ideology (an integrated value system). This research evaluates the thesis that conservative–liberal identity functions as a readiness to adopt beliefs and attitudes about newly politicized issues that one is told are consistent with the socially prescribed meaning of conservatism–liberalism. In Study 1, conservative–liberal identity, measured in 2000, had an independent prospective effect on support for invading Iraq in 2002 and support for the Iraq war in 2004, controlling for substantive ideology, party identity, and demographics. In Study 2, conservative- and liberal-identifiers adopted stances on farm subsidy policy based on randomly varied cues indicating which ideological group supports which stance. This cue-based influence was mediated by adoption of attitude-supportive beliefs. Discussion addresses the joint impact of political discourse and identity-based social influence on the organization of political attitudes.

Keywords Conservatism · Liberalism · Ideology · Political attitudes · Identity · Social influence

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Introduction

In American political discourse, certain stances on issues are described as "conservative" and the contrasting stances on those issues are described as "liberal." This is true for a substantively wide variety of issues, including social welfare spending, abortion, and foreign policy. As some have noted, however, the prevailing combinations of attitudes associated with the conservative and liberal labels are not entirely intuitive (e.g., Layman, Carsey, & Horowitz, 2006; Lipset, 1989). For example, a citizen who supports freedom of choice in the abortion domain might be expected to favor greater choice with regard to assisting the needy, as opposed to the government controlling such behavior through redistributive policy. A citizen who opposes abortion legality based on religious beliefs might be expected to favor greater government spending on relief for the needy based on other religious beliefs. It is not that the contemporary combinations of stances are conceptually unjustifiable. Rather, it is that opposite combinations may be equally justifiable based on underlying principles (e.g., Judd & Krosnick, 1989; Luskin, 1987). This raises the question of why the current combinations prevail.

One possibility, proposed by Converse (1964) and generally accepted by political scientists (e.g., Feldman, 2003; Sniderman & Bullock, 2004), is that these combinations result from the general context of political information and the way in which some Americans respond to it. It is widely argued that the discourse of a society greatly influences the psychological makeup of its members, including the particular combinations of beliefs and attitudes that they endorse (e.g., Cooley, 1902; Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998). And it is well known that self-identification as conservative or liberal has relevance for how one forms opinions in response to political information (e.g., Zaller, 1992). What is not known, however, is whether the relations between conservative–liberal self-label and responses to political information result (a) entirely from differences in *ideology* between conservative- and liberal-identifiers—that is, their systems of logically or psychologically inter-connected values, or (b) partly from *identity* (i.e., self-categorization) differences between these two types of people leading them to differentially respond to political cues from discourse.

This research evaluates the thesis that conservative–liberal identity functions as a readiness to adopt beliefs and attitudes about newly politicized issues that one is told are consistent with the socially prescribed meaning of conservatism–liberalism. By newly politicized issues we mean issues that are newly becoming the subject of well-publicized elite partisan and/or ideological dispute. As Bartels (1993) has argued, understanding the influence of discourse on attitudes requires studying attitudes over a period of time when their associated issues are becoming more prominent in discourse. This is the only way to fully appreciate how cultural–historical contexts can influence the organization of political attitudes.

We test three hypotheses derived from our general thesis. The first is that merely self-identifying as conservative or liberal—*independently of the substantive ideological worldviews* with which such identities are associated, and *independently of party identity*—will lead individuals to adopt a political attitude *newly revealed in discourse* to be ideologically appropriate. The second hypothesis is that ideological

identifiers will adopt the stances on a previously non-politicized issue that are indicated by experimentally manipulated cues to be identity-consistent for them. The third hypothesis pertains to the mechanism by which such identity-based social influence occurs. We posit that this process results from a tendency of ideological identifiers to *believe* the substantive arguments that are presented as consistent with their own ideological label and to *disbelieve* those presented as consistent with the opposite ideological label. In other words, adoption of attitude-supportive beliefs is predicted to mediate this form of social influence.

Conservatism–Liberalism as Ideology

We define ideology as an integrated substantive worldview, composed of ideationally inter-connected values and beliefs (Gerring, 1997). Individual differences in ideology are theorized to guide how people interpret and respond to aspects of their political and social environments (e.g., Abramowitz & Saunders, 2006; Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008). Since the late eighteenth century, the most commonly discussed ideological dimension has been the right vs. left—or, nowadays in the USA, conservative vs. liberal—dimension. Originally, liberalism meant support of freedom from state intervention in social and economic life, and opposition to the "the inbuilt prerogatives, wherever they survived, of Crown, Church, or aristocracy" (Davies, 1996, p. 802). Conservatism meant support for preservation of, or advocacy of caution in dismantling, these long-standing monarchical, religious, and aristocratic institutions (Davies, 1996, p. 812).

Since this time, the specific political views said to go with conservatism and liberalism have changed (e.g., Lipset, 1989; Shils, 1954). Preference for free markets and minimal government intervention in the economy have historically been described as liberal; however, beginning in the 1930s, opposition to versus support of redistributive social welfare provision became associated in American discourse with the conservative and liberal labels, respectively (Ellis & Stimson, 2007). Opposing military intervention in other countries was often said to be conservative; now it is said to be liberal (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Shapiro & Bloch-Elkon, 2007). Since the 1970s, pairs of contrasting "cultural" stances, such as those on abortion and homosexuality, have become increasingly conceptualized on the conservative–liberal dimension (Adams, 1997; Baldassari & Gelman, 2008; Fiorina & Abrams, 2009).

Yet some scholars argue that there has, nonetheless, been an impressive consistency in the meaning of conservative–liberal ideology over the last 200 years (Alford, Funk, & Hibbing, 2005; Bobbio, 1996; Jost et al., 2008). They propose that the conservative–liberal dimension is useful for conceptualizing individual differences in orientation toward the social and political world, including attitudes on a variety of issues across a variety of cultural–historical contexts. In terms of substantive content, the conservative–liberal dimension is often described as representing support for maintaining the status quo vs. support for effecting societal changes (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003; McClosky, 1958; Wilson & Patterson, 1968). This dimension corresponds straightforwardly with the substantive

meanings of the terms "conservative" and "liberal" as descriptors of people and ideas. In addition to this core value, conservatism–liberalism is also said to represent the core value of tolerance of vs. opposition to inequality (Bobbio, 1996; Jost et al., 2003). Finally, though unrelated to the historical conservative–liberal dimension, a major contemporary component of this dimension is a great vs. small emphasis on military strength (Shapiro & Bloch-Elkon, 2007).

Individual differences in conservative–liberal ideology are said to lead people to adopt particular political views that are organically consistent with their underlying ideologies (Alford et al., 2005; Jost et al., 2008). That is, when one becomes aware of an issue, one's stance on the issue will be influenced by one's ideologically based manner of experiencing the world. This may be described as an influence of underlying *values* on attitudes, as opposed to an influence of *identity* on attitudes (Boninger, Krosnick, & Berent, 1995). In contrast, party identity (as a Republican vs. a Democrat) has been treated conceptually as a "social identity" (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) with identity-based influences on attitudes (Campbell et al., 1960; Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002). Though correlated, party identity and conservative–liberal identity are empirically and conceptually distinguishable (e.g., Converse, 2007). Whereas researchers have long acknowledged that identification with a party leads one to respond to identity-relevant cues indicating what stances are identity-appropriate (Converse, 1964; Rahn, 1993; Goren, Federico, & Kittilson, 2009), researchers have treated conservative–liberal identity as an indicator of conservative–liberal *ideology*. Specifically, it is assumed that how one identifies on this dimension primarily reflects one's core system of preferences relevant to a range of political objects (e.g., Abramowitz & Saunders, 2006; Jost et al., 2003).

Empirical evidence does indeed suggest that ideological self-label is nowadays reliably tied to political attitudes and values. In contemporary American samples, conservative–liberal self-label is reliably correlated with a diverse range of substantive policy preferences—including preference for low vs. high social welfare spending, traditional vs. progressive cultural stances, and great vs. small emphasis on military strength. Moreover, these distinct policy preferences are correlated with one another in the same direction (e.g., Abramowitz & Saunders, 2006; Baldassari & Gelman, 2008). Conservative–liberal self-label is also correlated with values presumed to underlie many of these policy preferences, such as inequality vs. equality and status quo vs. change (e.g., Jost et al., 2008; Peffley & Hurwitz, 1985). Because of these correlations, conservative–liberal identity and conservative–liberal ideology are often treated as interchangeable.

Conservatism–Liberalism as Identity and Cue Receptivity

Although conservative–liberal self-label does seem to reflect ideological content to an important degree, it may also reflect something beyond ideological content (Conover & Feldman, 1981; Levitin & Miller, 1979). In particular, it may correlate with diverse political attitudes in part because it has represented a tendency to adopt judgments about newly politicized issues that have been indicated by cues to be

consistent with the adopted self-label and/or inconsistent with the opposite self-label.

The concept of identity has been prominent in social psychology, and it is closely linked with the concept of social influence (Fleming & Petty, 2000; Mackie, Worth, & Asuncion, 1990; Terry, Hogg, & White, 2000; Turner, 1991). Identity refers to self-categorization; that is, perception of the self as a member of a particular category (Deaux, 1992; Turner, 1991; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). One way in which identity is tied to social influence is that the particular identities that prevail at a time and place in history (e.g., feminist, African American, conservative) result from the cultural and discursive contexts specific to that time and place (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Cooley, 1902; Fiske et al., 1998; Huddy, 2001; Mead, 1925; Stryker, 1980). Thus, one's identity options are constrained by one's social surroundings.

Identity and social influence are linked in another way as well. A central notion in social psychological scholarship is that identities, once formed, have a great impact on the subjective meaning that people ascribe to objects in the social world, including evaluations of what outcomes are good and what outcomes are bad (Cohen, 2003; Turner, 1991; Turner et al., 1994). Subjective social meaning is influenced in great part by cues from the social environment indicating what it is appropriate for one to think as a member of a particular category. Social activity, in general, motivates and depends on the establishment of shared reality (Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Hardin & Conley, 2001). As Turner et al. (1994) put it, "It is not true that human information processing is purely individual, private, asocial, and nonnormative"; rather it may be viewed as "an emergent group process" resulting from identity-based social influence (p. 461). Critical to the process by which identity impacts subjective meaning is the distinction between forms of identity that are "personal" and forms of identity that are "social."

Unfortunately, this terminology has been used inconsistently (see Deaux, 1992). In self-categorization theory, the distinction between social and personal identity refers to a distinction in the *comparative inter-personal focus* that constitutes the identity at a point in time (Turner, 1991). A social identity is a self-categorization in which one represents oneself in terms of "shared similarities with members of certain social categories in contrast to other social categories" (Turner et al., 1994, p. 454). A personal identity, on the other hand, refers to a self-categorization representing one as distinctive and unique from other members of one's relevant social groups. Thus, it is not the *structural content* of the self-categorization that determines whether it is a social or a personal identity; rather, it is the level of *social comparison* implicit in the self-categorization at a particular point in time. A self-categorization as "conservative" will constitute a personal identity when one perceives oneself as conservative in comparison to relevant others, but will constitute a social identity when one's self-perception as conservative is experienced as a point of similarity with other ingroup members and as a point of collective difference with outgroup members. In self-categorization theory, particular identities fluctuate over time in the degree to which they are personal vs. social, based on temporally shifting social surroundings. Moreover, an identity is

likely to impact one's subjective experience of the world to the degree that it is socially focused.

In contrast to this framework for categorizing identity based on dynamic social comparative processes, other scholars have categorized forms of identity based on structure (Deaux, 1992; Reid & Deaux, 1996). These scholars draw a distinction between a type of self-categorization whose content is a personality trait, a characteristic, or a behavioral style—labeled "attributes"—and a type of self-categorization whose content is an explicit social group membership—labeled "social identities." As described above, an attribute may in particular contexts function as what self-categorization theory calls a social identity. That is, a particular attribute (e.g., liberal) may be experienced with a focus on one's similarity to one group of individuals, and the distinctiveness of this ingroup to an outgroup.

We argue that conservative–liberal identity functions as a readiness to experience the world in ways that one is told are consistent with the socially prescribed meaning of conservatism–liberalism. The socially prescribed meaning of conservatism–liberalism is conveyed through messages indicating which beliefs and stances are conservative and which ones are liberal. Individuals likely choose identities as conservative or liberal for a variety of reasons, including possession of strongly felt issue stances that are characterized in discourse as "conservative" or "liberal" (Krosnick, 1990), evaluations of liberal and conservative symbols (Conover & Feldman, 1981), and parental socialization (Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2001; Niemi & Jennings, 1992; Sears, 1975). This research examines whether such an identity, once formed, influences attitudes and beliefs about issues that are newly becoming the subject of well-publicized political dispute.

According to self-categorization theory, an identity will become more socially focused, and therefore more likely to influence one's experience of the world, when there exists "collective conflict" in one's social surroundings—in which "behavior is characterized by sharp intergroup discontinuities and strong within-group uniformities" (Turner et al., 1994, p. 456). This is true regardless of whether the identity is a self-perceived attribute (like conservative–liberal) or a self-perceived social group membership (like Republican–Democrat). Conservative- and liberal-identifiers have in fact diverged on various political attitudes since the 1970s (Baldassari & Gelman, 2008), and such divergence has coincided with a more polarized elite political atmosphere (Brewer, 2005; Poole & Rosenthal, 1997).[1] Thus ideological identity has become more closely tied to social conflict, and may therefore have become more likely to impact the subjective meaning ascribed to objects based on discourse indicating what is identity-appropriate.

Research examining the role of identity in social influence has largely shown that people are especially persuadable by identity-matched sources. Furthermore, evidence suggests that this form of social influence often occurs because identity-matched sources *define the relevant aspects of reality* for the individual (Allen & Wilder, 1977; Festinger, 1950; Insko, Smith, Alicke, Wade, & Taylor, 1985; Kelman, 1961; Mackie and Queller, 2000; Mackie et al., 1990; Terry et al., 2000).

[1] This is not to say that the American general public is politically polarized (see Fiorina, Abrams, & Pope, 2006, for a detailed discussion of this question).

In Deutsch and Gerrard's (1955) terminology, this type of social influence is referred to as "informational influence," as opposed to "normative influence" in which conformity results from group pressure (e.g., Moscovici, 1980). In one set of studies, for example, Cohen (2003) found that identity-matched sources lead message recipients to selectively believe particular arguments about the efficacy of a policy and to therefore support the policy. Mackie et al. (1990) found that strong arguments for a particular stance only persuaded message recipients when the arguments came from an identity-matched source. Thus, there is evidence that "groups define the very meaning of objects in the social world" (Cohen, 2003, p. 808), and that this is an important factor in identity-based social influence. Based on this notion we predict that adoption of attitude-supportive beliefs will mediate the impact of political cues on attitude among conservative- and liberal-identifiers.

The Present Research

The present research tests the idea that conservative–liberal identity is associated with a tendency to respond to political cues when forming beliefs and attitudes about newly politicized issues. Two studies test this idea, each using a large near-representative sample of American adults. In Study 1, a longitudinal panel of respondents was assessed on conservative–liberal identity, substantive conservative–liberal ideology, party identity, and a variety of demographic characteristics in the year 2000. In 2002, these respondents reported their attitudes about the prospect of invading Iraq, and in 2004 they reported their attitudes about the war in Iraq. The unique effects of the predictors, assessed in 2000, on Iraq Invasion and War Attitudes, measured in 2002 and 2004, respectively, are gauged. Our first hypothesis is that ideological self-label will independently predict Iraq Invasion and War attitudes.

This design is unique because it involves assessments of political individual differences prior to the emergence of a politicized issue—the prospect of invading Iraq emerged politically only after the 9/11/2001 terrorist attacks—and assesses participants' stances on the target issue subsequent to its politicization. A second unique aspect of this design is that conservative–liberal *identity* and conservative–liberal *ideology* are examined simultaneously as separate constructs, and their independent effects on an important new political attitude are gauged. Thus, any independent prospective effect of substantive ideology on future issue stance likely results from substantive ideological influences on issue stance. Likewise, any unique prospective effect of conservative–liberal self-label likely results from mere ideological self-identification leading one to adopt the stance indicated to be appropriate to one's identity.

Study 2 directly tests whether conservative–liberal identity partly represents cue receptivity, and examines the process by which such cue receptivity might occur. Participants received information indicating that either "conservatives," "liberals," or unspecified groups (based on random assignment) support the abolition of subsidies to American farmers. Participants then reported their attitudes about farm subsidies and the degree to which they believed the arguments presented in support of each stance. Domestic agricultural aid was chosen as the target issue because it is

not currently politicized, as defined presently, but is nonetheless very important for global humanitarian outcomes. For example, such aid has been criticized by both groups described as liberal (e.g., Oxfam) and groups described as conservative (e.g., The Heritage Foundation, the George W. Bush administration). Across conditions, identical justifications for each of the two viewpoints were presented; the only feature that varied across conditions was the information about which ideological group supports which stance. Our second hypothesis is that conservative- and liberal-identifiers will adopt stances indicated to be identity-appropriate by political cues. Our third hypothesis is that adoption of attitude-supportive beliefs will mediate the influence of political cues on attitude.

Study 1

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants in the American National Election Studies (ANES) 2000–2002–2004 panel with sufficient data were included in the analyses. A near-representative cross-section of the American electorate was drawn in 2000 using a combination of multi-stage area probability sampling and random digit dialing.[2] Respondents selected using the first method were recruited in person by members of the ANES field staff; respondents reached using the second method were recruited by telephone. Respondents who agreed to participate ($N = 1{,}807$) completed a survey either face-to-face or by telephone before the American presidential election of November, 2000. Most of these respondents ($n = 1{,}555$) completed an additional survey via the same mode after the election in 2000, and, of the respondents who completed both 2000 assessments, 1,087 completed another survey prior to the 2002 midterm election by telephone. Of these respondents, 786 completed a 2004 post-election assessment by telephone. Respondents who completed follow-up assessments were slightly more educated and older than respondents who did not complete follow-up assessments. Results did not vary significantly across respondents interviewed via the two different modes in the 2000 assessments. All analyses that did not involve the 2004 assessment included respondents who had completed both of the 2000 assessments and the one relevant 2002 assessment.

All item responses used to form composites were coded to range from 0 to 1 (i.e., lowest observed value = 0 and highest observed value = 1) before being averaged into composites. This procedure resulted in most measures having an observed range of 0 to 1, and measures for which this was not the case were then converted to range from 0 to 1 in order to facilitate the interpretation of unstandardized regression coefficients. Participants were assigned scores on a particular composite if they completed at least 50% of the items comprising that composite. All politically relevant measures were coded so that high scores signify

[2] See http://www.electionstudies.org/studypages/2000prepost/2000prepost.htm.

what are regarded as conservative views and low scores signify what are regarded as liberal views.

Measures

Conservative–Liberal Identity In the pre-election 2000 assessment, a random half of respondents were asked to place themselves on a 1 to 7 scale with the following response options: "Extremely liberal," "Liberal," "Slightly Liberal," "Moderate or middle of the road," "Slightly conservative," "Conservative," and "Extremely conservative." The other half of respondents received this item in a "branching" format. Specifically, they were first asked, "When it comes to politics, do you usually think of yourself as a liberal, a conservative, a moderate, or haven't you thought much about this?" Participants who did not choose liberal or conservative were then asked, "If you had to choose, would you consider yourself a liberal or a conservative?" Participants who chose liberal or conservative were asked if they considered themselves to be "strong" or "not very strong" liberals or conservatives. Based on responses to these questions, a comparable 7-point scale was derived for these participants. Results did not vary significantly across respondents receiving these different question formats.

In the post-election assessment, all participants were asked to place themselves on the 1 to 7 scale described above. The two reports of conservative–liberal self-label were averaged to form the Conservative–Liberal Identity measure ($r = .74$, $p < .001$; $M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.46$) in which higher scores correspond with a conservative identification and lower scores correspond with a liberal identification. This average was coded to range from 0 to 1.

Conservative–Liberal Ideology The construct of substantive Conservative–Liberal Ideology was represented in two ways across analyses, unidimensionally and multidimensionally. Both broad unidimensional representations of ideology, averaging across multiple content domains, and multidimensional representations of ideology, treating each content domain as a separate construct, appear in the literature (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009; Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009; Shafer & Claggett, 1995; Stenner, 2009). As described above, the substantive content comprising conservative vs. liberal ideology is said to include inequality (vs. equality) and opposition to (vs. support of) change (Jost et al., 2003). Nowadays, views concerning defense and the military are also described in association with this ideological dimension. Therefore, items from the 2000 assessments were selected based on their consistency with these content domains. Some of these items were especially appropriate to the core value of inequality, others were especially appropriate to the core value of opposition to change, and some appeared to be related to both. Other selected items pertained to views about the military. Although views about military and defense have not historically been associated with the conservative vs. liberal ideological dimension, such views are contemporarily characterized with reference to this dimension. Although an indicator of ideological conservatism vs. liberalism should perhaps not include content pertaining to views

about the military, we presently include such content in order to provide a more stringent test of the hypothesis that conservative–liberal identity predicts unique variance in Iraq war preferences.

To derive the measures of substantive conservative–liberal ideology, a total of 11 attitude and value parcels was computed, each of which was coded to range from 0 to 1 (see Table 1). One parcel of items was formed that directly represented the value of inequality, and a second was formed that directly represented the value of opposition to change. Other parcels were formed to represent the following political attitudes that are, at least tangentially, related to the core values of inequality and opposition to change (see Jost et al., 2003): size of government, social welfare, racial policies, women's rights, abortion, homosexual rights, immigration, and crime. Additionally, a parcel was formed to represent attitudes about the military.

When entered into a regression simultaneously, the 11 parcels accounted for 45% of the variance in conservative–liberal identity ($p < .001$). The one-dimensional ideology composite was computed for participants with scores on at least 50% of the 11 parcels by averaging the parcels and coding this average to range from 0 to 1 ($M = .57$, $SD = .17$, $\alpha = .78$). The correlation between this ideology composite and conservative–liberal identity was .65 ($p < .001$).

To gauge how best to combine the parcels into separate ideology subscales, a principal components analysis with varimax rotation was conducted. Three factors were extracted based on the observation that the parcels appeared to fall into three content categories commonly considered in research on political ideology—inequality, opposition to change, and strength/punitiveness (e.g., military and crime, although the latter may correspond with the two core values). Such a three-factor view of political preferences corresponds roughly with the model offered by Stenner (2005, 2009) which contrasts laissez-faire attitudes, opposition to change, and authoritarian attitudes.

A straightforwardly interpretable solution emerged. The first factor represented inequality/social welfare content. Parcels with highest loadings on this factor (with loadings in parentheses) were social welfare (.81), government size (.78), inequality (.69), and race (.67). No other parcel had a loading on this factor exceeding .34, and no parcel with a primary loading on this factor had a loading on any other factor exceeding .41. The second factor represented opposition to change/traditionalism content and contained abortion (.79), oppose change (.74), homosexual rights (.70), and women's rights (.52) parcels. No other parcel had a loading on this factor exceeding .31, and no parcel with a primary loading on this factor had a loading on any other factor exceeding .20. The third factor represented military strength and punitiveness against social transgressors, and contained immigration (.78), crime (.64), and military (.56) parcels. No other parcel had a loading on this factor exceeding .41, and no parcel with a primary loading on this factor had a loading on any other factor exceeding .34. To derive measures of inequality/social welfare ideology, oppose change/traditionalism ideology, and strength/punitiveness ideology, the appropriate parcels were averaged into composites ranging from 0 to 1. The correlations between these ideology subscales and Conservative–Liberal Identity were .51, .55, and .41, respectively ($ps < .001$).

Table 1 Study 1: Political value and attitude parcels from 2000 ANES

Parcel name	Items comprising parcel	Response format
Inequality ($\alpha = .68$)	"Our society should do whatever is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed" (R)	5-Point, strongly agree–strongly disagree
	"We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country"	5-Point, strongly agree–strongly disagree
	"One of the big problems in this country is that we don't give everyone an equal chance" (R)	5-Point, strongly agree–strongly disagree
	"This country would be better off if we worried less about how equal people are"	5-Point, strongly agree–strongly disagree
	"It is not really that big a problem if some people have more of a chance in life than others"	5-Point, strongly agree–strongly disagree
	"If people were treated more equally in this country we would have many fewer problems" (R)	5-Point, strongly agree–strongly disagree
Oppose change ($\alpha = .65$)	"The newer lifestyles are contributing to the breakdown of our society"	5-Point scale, strongly agree–strongly disagree
	"The world is always changing and we should adjust our view of moral behavior to those changes" (R)	5-Point scale, strongly agree–strongly disagree
	"This country would have many fewer problems if there were more emphasis on traditional family ties"	5-Point scale, strongly agree–strongly disagree
	"We should be more tolerant of people who choose to live according to their own moral standards, even if they are very different from our own" (R)	5-Point scale, strongly agree–strongly disagree
Small government ($\alpha = .75$)	Should government be doing less or more?	2-Point, less–more
	Free market vs. strong government to handle economic problems	2-Point, free market-strong government
	Has government gotten bigger because it's meddlesome or because problems are bigger?	2-Point, meddlesome-bigger problems
Social welfare ($\alpha = .79$)	Spending on welfare	3-point, decrease–increase
	Spending on food stamps	3-Point, decrease–increase
	Spending on aid to poor people	3-Point, decrease–increase
	Federal spending/services (pre-election)	5-Point, decrease–increase[a]
	Federal spending/services (post-election)	7-Point, decrease–increase
	Health insurance	5-Point, private-government[a]
	Jobs and good standard of living	5-Point, individual responsibility-government[a]

Table 1 continued

Parcel name	Items comprising parcel	Response format
Racial ($\alpha = .74$)	Should government make effort to improve condition of blacks?	5-Point scale, government should not–should[a]
	Affirmative action for companies with history of discriminating against blacks?	4-Point scale, should not have to–should
	Federal aid to blacks	3-Point scale, decrease–increase
	Should government see to it that white and black children attend same schools?	3-Point scale, government should not–should[b]
	Should government see to it that blacks get fair treatment in jobs?	5-Point scale, government should not–should[b]
	Black influence in politics	3-Point scale, Too much-too little
	Hispanic influence in politics	3-Point scale, too much–too little
Women's rights ($r = .26$, $p < .001$)	Equal role for women and men vs. women's place is in the home	5-Point scale, place in home-equal role[a]
	Women's influence in politics	3-Point scale, too much–too little
Abortion ($\alpha = .73$)	Abortion stance (pre-election)	4-Point scale, never legal–always legal
	Abortion stance (post-election)	4-Point scale, never legal–always legal
	Parental consent for minor having abortion	4-Point scale, Strongly favor-Strongly oppose
	Late-term abortion	4-Point scale, Strongly oppose-Strongly favor
Homosexual rights ($\alpha = .66$)	Laws to protect homosexuals from job discrimination	4-Point scale, strongly oppose–strongly support
	Should homosexual couples be allowed to adopt children?	No–yes
	Should homosexuals be allowed to serve in the military?	4-Point scale, strongly oppose–strongly support
Immigration ($r = .42$, $p < .001$)	Number of immigrants that should be allowed to move to USA	5-Point scale, decreased a lot–increased a lot
	Federal spending on border security to prevent illegal immigration	3-Point scale, increase–decrease
Crime ($r = .29$, $p < .001$)	Crime prevention: Better to punish criminals or address social problems?	7-Point scale, punishment-address problems
	Death penalty for persons convicted of murder	4-Point scale, strongly favor–strongly oppose

Table 1 continued

Parcel name	Items comprising parcel	Response format
Military ($r = .38$, $p < .001$)	Defense spending	5-Point scale, increase–decrease[a]
	Evaluation of military	0–100 feeling thermometer

Note: All items coded so higher scores indicate more "conservative" view

[a] Participants interviewed face-to-face made ratings on a seven-point scale. Participants interviewed by telephone responded to items in a branching format resulting in a five-point scale. Common five-point scale was computed across all participants

[b] Middle option was no opinion, based on response to previous item

Party Identity In the pre-election assessment participants were asked, "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?" Participants who did not select either Republican or Democrat were then asked, "Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic party?" Participants who selected Republican or Democrat were then asked if they considered themselves "strong" or "not very strong" Republicans or Democrats. Based on responses to these items, participants were assigned scores on a 7-point scale ranging from a low value of "strong Democrat" to a high value of "strong Republican" ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 2.12$). Scores on party identity were coded to range from 0 to 1.

Iraq Invasion and War Attitudes In 2002, participants were presented with the following statement and question, "As you may know, President Bush and his top advisers are discussing the possibility of taking military action against Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Do you favor or oppose military action against Iraq—or is this something you haven't thought about?" After responding to this question, participants indicated whether they held their views "strongly" or "not strongly." Scores on a four-point scale were computed ranging from a low value of "strongly oppose" to a high value of "strongly favor" ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.25$). Scores on Iraq Invasion Attitude were coded to range from 0 to 1.

In 2004, participants were asked, "Taking everything into account, do you think the war in Iraq has been worth the cost or not?" Participants were assigned scores on a binary variable based on their responses (1 = believes Iraq war was worth the cost (46% of respondents who provided an answer), 0 = believes Iraq war was not worth the cost (54% of respondents who provided an answer)).

Demographics Several demographic variables representing politically relevant identities and socio-economic status were measured in 2000. These were sex, age, race/ethnicity (sets of codes for Black and Latino), religious affiliation (sets of codes for Protestant and Catholic), religious attendance, household income, education, and residence in the South. All were coded to range from 0 to 1.

Results

The first analyses assessed whether Conservative–Liberal Identity prospectively predicted unique variance in attitudes pertaining to the Iraq war, independently of unidimensional Conservative–Liberal Ideology, Party Identity, and the demographic variables. Table 2 displays results of an OLS regression analysis in which the above variables were entered as predictors of Iraq Invasion Attitude in 2002 (see first column of data), and a binary logistic regression analysis in which these variables were entered as predictors of Iraq War Attitude in 2004 (see second column of data).[3]

While the unidimensional ideology composite had large significant effects (2002 invasion attitude: $b = .60$, $p < .001$; 2004 war attitude: $b = 4.18$, $p < .001$), Conservative–Liberal Identity accounted for unique variance in the target attitude in both analyses (2002 invasion attitude: $b = .20$, $p < .01$; 2004 war attitude: $b = 1.21$, $p < .05$). Individuals with conservative values and attitudes were more inclined to support the Iraq war than were individuals with liberal values and attitudes, and individuals who identified as conservative were more inclined to support the Iraq war than were individuals with liberal self-identifications. To the extent that the ideology composite comprehensively represents substantive ideological content, these findings suggest that merely identifying as conservative or liberal has implications for future stance on a subsequently politicized issue.

Substantive ideology, as operationalized in the above analyses, had a towering effect. The first pair of analyses does not, however, reveal which particular aspects of substantive ideology prospectively predicted future issue stance. In particular, the substantive ideology composite included content directly related to military and defense, which has not historically been associated with the conservative–liberal dimension. To explore this, and also to test whether Conservative–Liberal Identity predicts unique variance when the effects of ideology are represented multidimensionally, the above two analyses were repeated with the three domain-specific ideology measures entered in place of the omnibus ideology measure.

Once again, Conservative–Liberal Identity accounted for unique variance in both 2002 Iraq Invasion Attitude ($b = .21$, $p < .01$) and 2004 Iraq War Attitude ($b = 1.18$, $p < .05$) (see top row of data in Table 3). Furthermore, a clear pattern emerged with respect to which specific aspects of ideology predicted preferences about the Iraq war. Specifically, the oppose change/traditionalism and strength/punitiveness ideological dimensions both predicted attitudes about the war, with the latter having an especially strong effect on Iraq Invasion Attitude in 2002 ($b = .54$, $p < .001$). However, the inequality/social welfare dimension did not have effects (see second through fourth rows of data in Table 3). Thus, it appears that

[3] The political individual differences entered into these equations were moderately to strongly intercorrelated, and this raises the possibility that multicollinearity renders the regression coefficients uninterpretable. To determine whether or not multicollinearity was presently an issue, tolerance statistics were computed for Conservative-Liberal Identity, Party Identity, Unidimensional Substantive Ideology, and each of the three ideology subscales. Tolerance statistics range from 0 to 1, and tolerance of <.1 is generally regarded as signifying multicollinearity. Not a single tolerance statistic fell below .43. The political constructs under investigation are sufficiently distinguishable, and multicollinearity is not a problem in the present analyses.

Table 2 Study 1: The prospective effects of conservative vs. liberal identity and ideology in 2000 on Iraq attitudes in 2002 and 2004

	Iraq Invasion Attitude in 2002			Iraq War Attitude in 2004	
Predictors measured in 2000:	*b*	*SE*	*β*	*b*	*SE*
Conservative vs. liberal identity	.20**	.07	.12	1.21*	.57
Conservative vs. liberal ideology	.60***	.11	.25	4.18***	.88
Party identity	.16**	.05	.13	2.69***	.36
Female	−.02	.03	−.02	.19	.21
Age	−.29***	.06	−.14	−1.34**	.50
Black	−.09†	.05	−.06	.03	.45
Latino	.01	.07	.01	.40	.55
Protestant	.02	.03	.02	.39	.25
Catholic	.02	.04	.03	.42	.28
Religious attendance	.00	.04	.00	.37	.27
Household income	.00	.09	.00	−1.04	.65
Education	−.26***	.06	−.16	−.12	.42
South	.04	.03	.05	.25	.22
R^2	26***			.49***[a]	
N	839			719	

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .10$. Analysis predicting Iraq Invasion Attitude in 2002 is OLS and analysis predicting Iraq War Attitude in 2004 is binary logistic regression. High scores on political measures signify more "conservative" attitudes and identifications. All variables coded to range from 0 to 1

[a] Negelkerke R^2

preferences pertaining to opposing change and strength/punitiveness, along with merely identifying as conservative or liberal above and beyond one's substantive preferences, predicted Iraq war-related attitudes. Substantive preferences pertaining to inequality and social welfare views did not independently predict Iraq War Attitudes.

Discussion

Conservative–liberal identity, measured prior to the politicization of a particular issue, predicted future stance on that issue independently of substantive measures of conservative–liberal ideology, party identity, and demographics. This suggests that mere identification as conservative or liberal prospectively predicts one's likelihood of adopting a discursively "appropriate" stance on a subsequently politicized issue, independently of one's substantive ideology and partisan commitment.

But substantive ideological content was very important—in fact, substantive ideological dimensions had larger effects on subsequent attitudes than did conservative–liberal identity. Moreover, the sources of these effects were quite clear and intuitive. Whereas valuing opposition to change/traditionalism and

Table 3 Study 1: The prospective effects of conservative–liberal identity and domain-specific conservative ideologies in 2000 on Iraq attitudes in 2002 and 2004

	Iraq Invasion Attitude in 2002			Iraq War Attitude in 2004	
Predictors measured in 2000:	*b*	*SE*	*β*	*b*	*SE*
Conservative vs. liberal self-identity	.21**	.07	.12	1.18*	.58
Inequality/social welfare ideology	−.01	.08	−.01	.69	.61
Oppose change/traditionalism ideology	.19*	.09	.09	2.15**	.69
Strength/punitiveness ideology	.54***	.08	.24	2.24**	.70
Party identity	.19***	.05	.17	2.83***	.38
Female	−.03	.03	−.04	.17	.21
Age	−.28***	.06	−.14	−1.34**	.50
Black	−.13*	.05	−.08	−.16	.46
Latino	.02	.07	.01	.44	.57
Protestant	.01	.03	.01	.32	.25
Catholic	.01	.04	.01	.36	.28
Religious attendance	.02	.04	.02	.41	.29
Household income	.01	.09	.01	−1.00	.66
Education	−.20***	.06	−.13	.13	.44
South	.03	.03	.04	.21	.22
R^2	28***			.49***[a]	
N	836			715	

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .10$. Analysis predicting Iraq Invasion Attitude in 2002 is OLS and analysis predicting Iraq War Attitude in 2004 is binary logistic regression. High scores on political measures signify more "conservative" attitudes and identifications. All variables coded to range from 0 to 1

[a] Negelkerke R^2

(especially) strength/punitiveness predicted unique variance in subsequent Iraq war-related attitudes, inequality/social welfare ideology did not. This is noteworthy because structural analyses of political value and attitude items, including the present one, tend to reveal that social welfare-related attitudes are the highest loaders on the first factor. Also, contrasting views on redistributive social welfare provision constitute the longest running ideological disagreement in contemporary American politics (Brewer, 2005; Gerring, 1998). Thus, what may be regarded as one of the best substantive indicators of conservative–liberal ideology was less important for determining a subsequently politicized attitude than was mere ideological self-label. It is quite possible that the particular domain-specific ideological dimensions that best predict new issue stances vary depending on the content of the new issues. Thus, the findings regarding substantive ideology would appear to support the views that (a) political attitudes are to an important extent influenced by substantive ideological content (e.g., Jost et al., 2003), and (b) it is useful to conceptualize substantive ideology multidimensionally (e.g., Joseph, Graham, & Haidt, 2009; Shafer & Claggett, 1995; Stenner, 2009).

Study 2

Our primary thesis is that conservative–liberal identity in part represents receptivity to political cues indicating what stance one should adopt on a newly politicized issue and why one should adopt it. Study 1 did not directly test whether conservative–liberal identity represents receptivity to political cues. Rather, cue receptivity was assumed to be the mechanism by which conservative–liberal identity independently predicted a new political attitude. Although substantive ideological content was controlled for, substantive stance on the target attitude was confounded with political cues: all respondents were exposed to the same real-life discourse indicating that support for the war was "conservative" and opposition to the war was "liberal". Study 2 overcomes this limitation using an experimental methodology. Specifically, random assignment is used to determine which substantive stance on an issue is said to be "conservative" and which substantive stance is said to be "liberal" for each participant. Furthermore, Study 2 examines whether attitude-supportive beliefs mediate the impact of such political cues on political attitudes.

Method

Participants

Participants were 799 Americans constituting a near-representative sample of the nation's adults who completed the main experimental portion of this study in late 2007 and early 2008.[4] The sample was recruited and the survey was administered by Knowledge Networks (KN; www.knowledgenetworks.com). KN is a survey research organization that recruits panelists using random digit dialing and provides incentives for participants to periodically complete surveys from their homes via the internet. Participants without internet capability are provided with a Microsoft Network TV internet appliance and internet service as an incentive; those with internet capability are awarded points redeemable for cash as an incentive.

Procedure and Measures

All variables were recoded to range from 0 to 1 with interaction terms formed by multiplying these 0–1 coded variables.

Initial Assessment In initial assessments conducted up to 1 year prior to the main assessment, participants responded to items with seven response options (similar to those used in Study 1) assessing conservative–liberal identity ($M = 4.13, SD = 1.44$) and (Republican vs. Democratic) party identity ($M = 3.68, SD = 2.06$). Also in these assessments participants provided demographic information.

[4] Data collected by *Time-sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences*, NSF Grant 0818839, Jeremy Freese and Penny Visser, Principal Investigators.

Main Assessment Participants were asked to read a policy description and then respond to the questions that followed. Participants read a brief and simple description of debate about American farm subsidy policy that formed the basis of the experimental manipulation. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. In one condition participants were told that conservatives support the U.S. government giving money to American farmers whereas liberals oppose this policy (Liberals Oppose Condition). In the second condition participants were told that liberals support the U.S. government giving money to American farmers whereas conservatives oppose this policy (Conservatives Oppose Condition). In the third condition participants were told that "various groups" support the U.S. government giving money to American farmers and "various other groups" oppose this policy (Control Condition). The arguments stated for support and opposition to the policy of giving money to farmers were identical across the three conditions. Thus, differences in responses across conditions entirely reflect the influence of political cues indicating which stance is "conservative" and which stance is "liberal." Furthermore, because ideological and party identities were not assessed in the main experimental session, there was no reason for participants to expect a political cue manipulation. Below is the description read by participants in the Liberals Oppose condition:

> The U.S. government gives billions of dollars to American farmers every year. The reasons for this policy, which is supported by conservatives, are to protect American farmers from losing their jobs and to keep the cost of food low for Americans.
> However, liberals have argued that the government should stop giving money to farmers. They note that this policy prevents poor agricultural countries from growing economically and bringing their citizens out of poverty. Also, the money saved by Americans in food costs is taken from them in taxes anyway.

The description in the Conservatives Oppose condition was identical except the word "conservatives" in the first paragraph was replaced with the word "liberals" and the word "liberals" in the second paragraph was replaced with the word "conservatives." The Control condition description was also identical to the above description except the word "conservatives" in the first paragraph was replaced with "various groups" and the word "liberals" in the second paragraph was replaced with "various other groups."

After reading the description, participants responded to an item assessing their position on American farm subsidy policy, which served as this study's main dependent variable. Participants read, "Now we would like to know your opinion about this issue. Please indicate your answer below." and were then asked, "Do you support or oppose the U.S. government policy of giving money to American farmers?" Participants were presented with fully labeled response options organized along a 7-point continuum ("Strongly support," "Support," "Somewhat support," "Neither support nor oppose," "Somewhat oppose," "Oppose," and "Strongly oppose") ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.52$). This indicator was coded to range from 0 to 1 with higher scores representing opposition to farm subsidies.

After reporting farm subsidy attitude, participants responded to a series of questions gauging justifying beliefs for each of the stances. Each of these questions began with the stem, "To what extent do you believe that the U.S. giving money to American farmers…." The sentence endings across the four justifying belief questions were, "prevents American farmers from losing their jobs?", "keeps the cost of food low for Americans?", "prevents poor agricultural countries from developing?", and "requires collecting the money from Americans in taxes anyway?" Each question was responded to on a 5-point scale with response options of "Not at all," "Slightly," "Moderately," "Very much," and "Extremely." All indicators were coded to range from 0 to 1, with higher scores representing greater endorsement of the belief.

Results

Influence of Political Cues on Farm Subsidy Attitude

We hypothesized that cues indicating where conservatives and liberals stand on farm subsidy policy would influence ideological identifiers' attitudes on this issue. Several analyses were conducted to test this hypothesis. In the first, only participants in the experimental conditions were included. Opposition to Farm Subsidies was regressed on Conservative–Liberal Identity, Condition (Liberals Oppose vs. Conservatives Oppose), Party Identity, and demographics (sex, age, Black, Latino, household income, education, south, and midwest) at step 1, and the Condition × Conservative–Liberal Identity interaction term was added at step 2 (see Table 4, first and second columns of data).

At Step 1 neither Condition nor Conservative–Liberal Identity had a significant effect. At Step 2 the interaction was significant ($b = -.43$, $p < .001$). Among participants in the Liberals Oppose Condition, conservative-identifiers were less likely to oppose farm subsidies than were liberal-identifiers ($r = -.24$, $p < .001$). However, among participants in the Conservatives Oppose Condition, conservative-identifiers were more likely to oppose farm subsidies than were liberal-identifiers ($r = .16$, $p < .01$). This interaction effect is graphed in Fig. 1.

Among participants in the control condition, there was no association between conservative–liberal identity and opposition to farm subsidies ($r = .05$, *ns*). This suggests that the attitude assessed in this study was not the subject of mass ideological group differences at the time of assessment. To test whether each experimental condition affected where ideological identifiers stood on farm policy relative to the control condition, Opposition to Farm Subsidies was regressed on Conservative–Liberal Identity, Liberals Oppose vs. All, Conservatives Oppose vs. All, Party Identity, and demographics at step 1, and the two Condition × Conservative–Liberal Identity interaction terms were added at step 2 (see Table 4, third and fourth columns of data). This analysis was conducted with the full sample.

Neither Conservative–Liberal Identity nor the condition variables had an effect at step 1. Both interactions were significant at step 2 ($b = -.27$, $p < .01$, for Liberals Oppose vs. All × Conservative–Liberal Identity, and $b = .15$, $p < .05$, for Conservatives Oppose vs. All × Conservative–Liberal Identity), indicating that

Table 4 Study 2: Ideological cues, conservative–liberal identity, and opposition to farm subsidies

	Liberals vs. conservatives oppose model						Ideological opposition vs. control group model					
	Step 1			Step 2			Step 1			Step 2		
	b	*SE*	*β*	*b*	*SE*	*β*	*b*	*SE*	*β*	*b*	*SE*	*β*
Conservative vs. liberal identity	−.06	.06	−.05	.14*[a]	.07	.13	−.03	.05	−.03	.00 [a]	.07	.00
Liberals oppose vs. conservatives oppose conditions	−.01	.02	−.01	.22***[a]	.05	.43	–			–		
Liberals oppose vs. conservatives oppose conditions × conservative vs. liberal identity	–			−.43***	.09	−.52	–			–		
Liberals oppose vs. all other conditions	–			–			.00	.02	.00	.14** [a]	.05	.26
Conservatives oppose vs. all other conditions	–			–			.01	.02	.01	−.08 [a]	.05	−.15
Liberals oppose vs. all other conditions × conservative vs. liberal identity	–			–			–			−.27**	.09	−.30
Conservatives oppose vs. all other condtions × conservative vs. liberal identity	–			–			–			.15*	.09	.18
Party identity	.02	.04	.02	.01	.04	.02	.00	.03	−.01	.00	.03	−.01
Female	−.06*	.02	−.11	−.06*	.02	−.11	−.05**	.02	−.10	−.05**	.02	−.10
Age	.07	.05	.06	.07	.05	.06	.08†	.04	.07	.07†	.04	.06
Black	−.03	.04	−.03	−.02	.04	−.03	−.02	.03	−.02	−.02	.03	−.02
Latino	.00	.04	.00	−.02	.04	−.02	.01	.03	.02	.00	.03	.00
Household income	.15**	.05	.14	.15**	.05	.04	.16***	.04	.15	.16***	.04	.15
Education	.06*	.03	.11	.06*	.03	.10	.04†	.02	.07	.04†	.02	.07
South	−.02	.03	−.04	−.02	.03	−.03	−.02	.02	−.04	−.02	.02	−.03
Midwest	−.03	.03	−.05	−.04	.03	.07	−.02	.02	−.03	−.03	.02	−.04
R^2	06**			.10***			.05***			.08***		
N	524			524			792			792		

Note: *** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$ † $p < .10$. Significance tests for hypothesized interactions are one-tailed. All other significance tests are two-tailed. All variables coded to range from 0 to 1

[a] Coefficient is simple effect among participants at level 0 of other variables included in interaction term(s) with the variable. This is because interaction terms were formed by multiplying 0–1 coded variables, not mean-centered variables

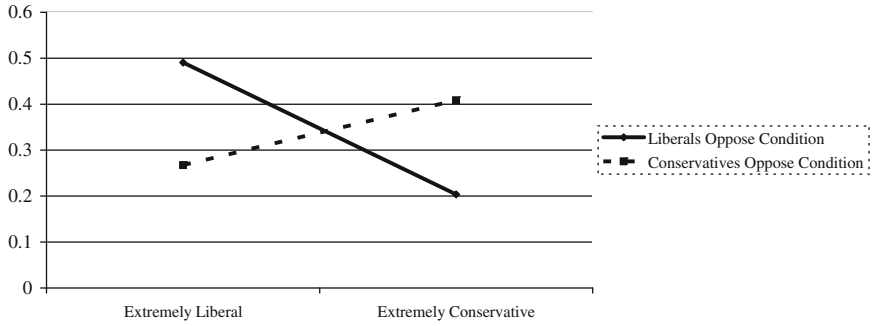

Fig. 1 Political cues as a moderator of the effect of conservative–liberal identity on opposition to farm subsidies. *Note*: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .10$. Predicted values of opposition to farm subsidies (coded to range from 0 to 1) for hypothetical individuals at the "extremely liberal" and "extremely conservative" endpoints of the conservative–liberal identity continuum and in the liberals oppose and conservatives oppose experimental conditions

both the Liberals Oppose and Conservatives Oppose conditions significantly impacted the relation between ideological identity and attitude relative to the comparison group in the analysis, the control group.

Attitude-Supportive Beliefs as Mediators

We hypothesize that ideological identity leads people to believe or disbelieve attitude-supportive information depending on the identity match or mismatch of the source (e.g., Mackie & Queller, 2000), and to in turn adopt the cue-consistent attitude. To test this hypothesis, attitude-supportive beliefs were examined as mediators of the effects of cues on ideological identifiers' attitudes.

Figure 2a displays the mediational model among liberal-identifiers ($n = 134$) and Fig. 2b displays the mediational model among conservative-identifiers ($n = 188$). When Oppose Farm Subsidies was regressed on Liberals Oppose vs. Conservatives Oppose Condition, Party Identity, and the demographics, the condition variable had a significant positive effect among liberal-identifiers ($b = .25$, $p < .01$) and a significant negative effect among conservative-identifiers ($b = -.26$, $p < .001$). However, both of these effects were eliminated when the four justifying beliefs were added to the equation ($b = .08$, *ns*, for liberal-identifiers, and $b = -.08$, *ns*, for conservative-identifiers).

When each of the justifying beliefs was regressed on the model described above, conservative- and liberal-identifiers displayed opposite effects (see Fig. 2a, b). Specifically, the liberals oppose condition (relative to conservatives oppose) made liberal-identifiers less likely to believe that farm subsidies save jobs and keep food costs low, and more likely to believe that farm subsidies keep countries poor and cost taxpayer money. This condition variable, in contrast, made conservative-identifiers more likely to believe that farm subsidies save jobs and

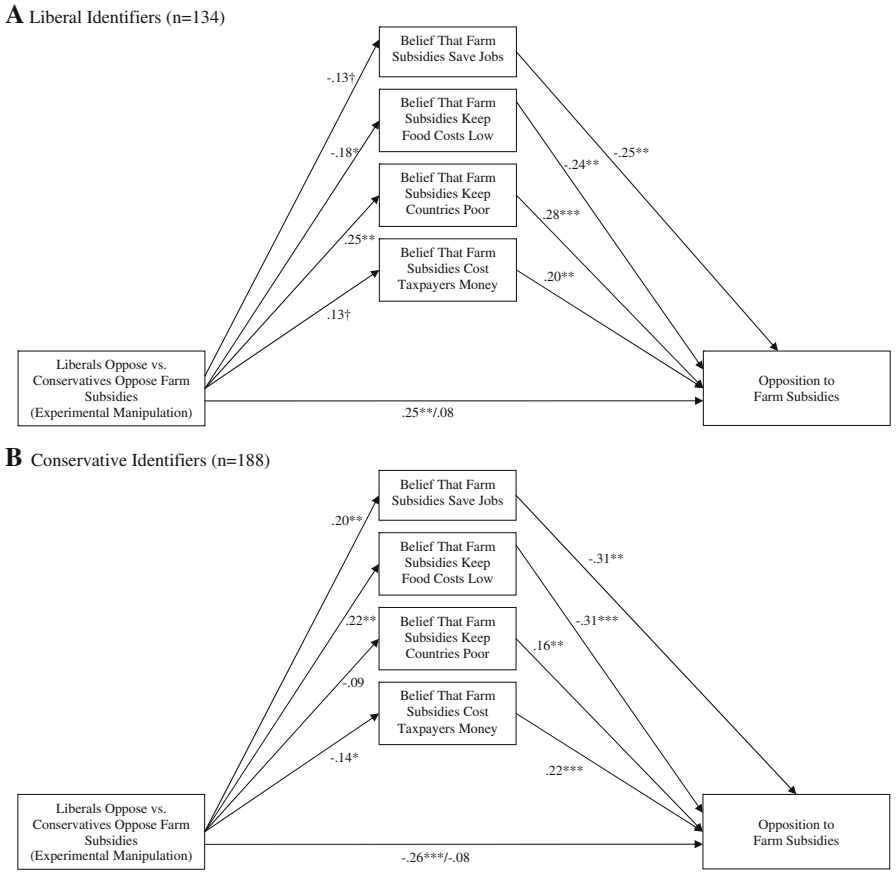

Fig. 2 Attitude-supportive beliefs as mediators of the effect of political cues on opposition to farm subsidies. *Note*: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .10$. Unstandardized regression coefficients with all variables coded to range from 0 to 1

keep food costs low, and less likely to believe that farm subsidies cost taxpayers money. The effect of condition on belief that subsidies keep countries poor was not statistically significant among conservative-identifiers, but was in the predicted direction.

Among both conservative and liberal-identifiers, beliefs that farm subsidies save jobs and keep food costs low were associated with less opposition to farm subsidies, and beliefs that farm subsidies keep countries poor and cost taxpayer money were associated with more opposition to farm subsidies. Furthermore, among liberal-identifiers, all indirect effects of condition on opposition to farm subsidies, via each of the four justifying beliefs, were either significant or near-significant (subsidies save jobs: *Sobel* $Z = 1.38$, $p < .10$; subsidies keep food costs low: *Sobel* $Z = 1.74$, $p < .05$; subsidies keep countries poor: *Sobel* $Z = 2.30$, $p < .05$; subsidies cost

taxpayer money: *Sobel* $Z = 1.34$, $p < .10$). The same was true for conservative-identifiers (subsidies save jobs: *Sobel* $Z = 2.30$, $p < .05$; subsidies keep food costs low: *Sobel* $Z = 2.54$, $p < .01$; subsidies keep countries poor: *Sobel* $Z = 1.13$, $p < .15$; subsidies cost taxpayer money: *Sobel* $Z = 1.71$, $p < .05$).

Discussion

In Study 2 participants were presented with a policy that has implications for human physical quality of life, and equality in the distribution of this, but is not nowadays the subject of well-publicized partisan and ideological dispute. This study tested what would happen if it were suddenly imbued with ideological content. The answer appears to be that ideological identifiers would to some extent conform to the socially manufactured ideological line. Among participants who were informed that liberals oppose farm money, liberal-identifiers were more inclined to oppose farm money than were conservative-identifiers; among those who were informed that conservatives oppose farm money, conservative-identifiers were more inclined to oppose farm money than were liberal-identifiers. When no cues were provided, the correlation between ideological self-label and opposition to farm money was indistinguishable from zero.

This conformity appeared to reflect a tendency of conservative- and liberal-identifiers to believe information when it was argued by an ideologically matched source and to disbelieve information when it was argued by an ideologically mismatched source. Specifically, adoption vs. rejection of attitude-supportive beliefs based on political cues mediated the tendencies of conservative- and liberal-identifiers to adopt cue-consistent attitudes. Thus, this conformity appears to occur because ideologically matched sources define the relevant aspects of reality for the individual (e.g., Mackie & Queller, 2000). However, it must be noted that attitude-supportive beliefs were assessed after attitude about farm subsidies; thus these beliefs may in part reflect rationalizations of farm subsidy attitude.

General Discussion

The conservative–liberal dimension is the most widely referenced ideological concept in political discourse. It is used interchangeably with the right vs. left ideological dimension, which has been around since the late eighteenth century. Discussion of diverse political attitudes with reference to the conservative–liberal dimension would seem to be an important social factor influencing how some Americans organize their political attitudes and identities.

The present research investigated an aspect of this form of social influence using two national samples. In particular, it examined how a pre-existing identity as conservative or liberal might influence people's responses to a new issue that was not previously the subject of well-publicized elite political dispute. In Study 1, mere ideological identity, independently of substantive ideology and party identity, prospectively predicted unique variance in adoption of the "conservative" vs. "liberal" stance on a newly politicized issue. This suggests that there is something

about ideological identity that leads people to follow cues suggesting what stance they should adopt, independently of their substantive ideologies and their partisan commitments. In Study 2, ideological identifiers adopted issue stances on the basis of randomly determined political cues indicating what stance is ideologically appropriate. Mediational analyses suggested that this social influence process resulted from participants believing arguments about the nature of reality from identity-matched sources and disbelieving such arguments from identity-mismatched sources. However, because justifying beliefs were assessed after attitude, the possibility that such beliefs were generated as rationalizations of farm subsidy attitude cannot be dismissed. Nonetheless, the present findings suggest that commitment to an ideological self-label should be considered a part of the process by which social cues influence the issue stances that contemporary Americans adopt. Such a view is consistent with psychological perspectives on identity-based social influence (e.g., Cohen, 2003; Mackie et al., 1990; Turner, 1991), interpersonal motivation to establish shared reality (e.g., Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Hardin & Conley, 2001), and biased assimilation of belief-consistent and belief-inconsistent information (Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979; Miller, McHoskey, Bane, & Dowd, 1993; Taber & Lodge, 2006). It is also consistent with perspectives emphasizing elite-driven discursive influences on political attitudes (Carmines & Stimson, 1989; Feldman, 2003; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998; Sniderman & Bullock, 2004) and symbolic political leanings (Free & Cantril, 1967; Stimson, 2004).

Ideological Identity and Substantive Ideology as Separate Constructs

In the present research, conservative–liberal identity and substantive conservative–liberal ideology were treated as conceptually and empirically distinct. In research on ideology, these measures are often viewed as interchangeable indicators of a single construct (e.g., Jost et al., 2003). Furthermore, in psychological research more generally, formal structural analyses are often used to form the measures of constructs whose substantive processes are examined. These considerations might lead one to conclude that it would be appropriate to combine issue stances and ideological identity into a single measure of right vs. left ideology if ideological identity were to load on an issue-based ideological factor.

Prior research suggests that not only is conservative–liberal identity correlated with diverse political attitudes, but it is generally correlated more strongly with diverse attitudes than these diverse attitudes are correlated with one another (Baldassari & Gelman, 2008; Peffley & Hurwitz, 1985). This suggests that whatever construct is represented by conservative–liberal identity is important for explaining the connections among substantively diverse attitudes. Indeed, in the current Study 1 sample, conservative–liberal identity was more strongly correlated with the ideology subscales (rs = .55, .51, and .41, for oppose change/traditionalism, inequality/social welfare, and strength/punitiveness, respectively) than the ideology subscales were with one another (rs range from .34 to .39). And in a principal components analysis with conservative–liberal identity and the 11 value/attitude parcels entered simultaneously, conservative–liberal identity was the highest loader

on the first principal component, whose sole extraction was justified based on a scree test. This is consistent with the view that it is sometimes useful to conceptualize and operationalize a single right vs. left ideological dimension that may be measured with substantive attitudes and/or ideological self-label (see Jost et al., 2009).

Nonetheless, there are theoretical and empirical reasons to justify the separate conceptualization and measurement of ideological identity and substantive ideology. As discussed above, evidence suggests that conservative–liberal identity is to an important extent the "glue" that holds together political preferences of diverse content. But why is this the case? Combining self-label and substantive attitudes and values into a single measure precludes investigation of the processes that connect ideological identity with substantive political views. And there is strong evidence that the processes linking conservative–liberal identity to political preferences should not be glossed over.

First of all, ideological self-label has become more strongly correlated with a range of political attitudes since the 1970s (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2006; Baldassari & Gelman, 2008). And stances on issues regarded as "cultural" or "moral" have increased in association with ideological self-label at a faster rate than have stances on other issues (Baldassari & Gelman, 2008). Cultural/moral issues only became the subject of partisan and ideological dispute beginning in the 1970s, with a strong increase in the 1980s and 1990s (Adams, 1997; Baldassari & Gelman, 2008; Brewer, 2005; Fiorina & Abrams, 2009; Gerring, 1998). As noted earlier, conservatism–liberalism has been applied to the issue domain of welfare statism since the 1930s, but cultural/moral issues were not widely discussed as components of conservatism–liberalism until the 1970s. So if ideological identity has changed in its relation with issue stances over time, based on changing cultural and discursive contexts, then the processes underlying identity–ideology relations would seem to have a lot to do with social influence. Understanding these social influence processes requires research in which identity and ideology are conceptualized as distinct constructs.

Another finding from the political attitudes literature suggesting the importance of social influence for the identity–ideology connection is research demonstrating correlates of "constraint." The term constraint has been used somewhat inconsistently in the political attitudes literature (see Luskin, 1987), but it usually refers to individual differences in strength of positive associations (a) among diverse political attitudes scaled on a right vs. left dimension, and (b) between these attitudes and conservative–liberal self-label (see Federico and Schneider, 2007). As discussed above, constraint has increased among Americans since the 1970s. However, research reliably indicates that constraint is higher among individuals who are highly exposed to political discourse than it is among those with little exposure to political discourse (Jacoby, 1995; Jennings, 1992; Judd and Krosnick, 1989; Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, 1991; Stimson, 1975).

These findings further support the view that it is exposure to political discourse that governs constraint, as defined above. Not only do changes in discourse over time impact identity–ideology associations, but individual differences in exposure to (and comprehension of) discourse predicts the strength of these associations. This

all suggests that links between ideological identity and political views should be understood in terms of historically varying discursive surroundings and basic social influence processes. To do so requires conceptualizing and operationalizing ideological identity and ideology as separate constructs.

Finally, one might argue that because the terms conservative and liberal have substantive meaning as person descriptors, the unique effects of ideological identity in Study 1 represent the effects of a substantive dimension rather than an "identity effect." This would suggest that the conceptual distinction between ideological identity and ideology is artificial. To this we counter that whatever substantive meaning is associated with the labels conservative and liberal can be measured and controlled for. If the controlling of such measures is comprehensive (as it is here) and does not produce problems of multicollinearity (as it does not here), then it is justifiable to conceptualize and operationalize ideological identity and substantive ideology as distinct constructs and to observe their unique effects on outcome measures.

The Combination of Discursive Surroundings and Identity-Based Social Influence

The findings reported here suggest that the structuring of diverse political preferences in accordance with an ideological identity results from an interaction between (a) political discourse and (b) basic social influence processes involving identity. Because identity as conservative vs. liberal is largely the glue that holds together diverse political preferences, this suggests that ideological identity is relevant to attitude organization. Research on identity processes in social influence has shown that identities in certain circumstances lead people to be selectively persuaded by identity-matched sources (Cohen, 2003; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Furthermore, this influence is often the result of identity-matched sources defining the relevant aspects of reality for the individual (e.g., Mackie et al., 1990). This tends to occur when the topic at hand is substantively relevant to the identity (Terry et al., 2000), as is the case with ideologically identified sources discussing substantive political issues.

Research in political psychology has examined the role of identity and social influence processes involved in political attitude formation and change. However, this research has tended to focus on party identity (e.g., Rahn, 1993), not conservative–liberal identity (which has been treated as an indicator of ideology). There is good reason for focusing on party identity as a source of cue receptivity. The American political parties are powerful institutions that have a major influence on the way Americans think about politics. Party identity was first studied in the 1960s, and was quickly identified to function as a "perceptual screen" through which political information is filtered and interpreted (Campbell et al., 1960). Evidence from time-series, panel, and experimental studies have supported this view (Brewer, 2005; Cohen, 2003; Converse & Markus, 1979; Gerber & Jackson, 1993; Goren et al., 2009; Green et al., 2002; Layman & Carsey, 2002; Layman et al., 2006; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998; Rahn, 1993).

However, there is good reason to believe that conservative–liberal identity also functions as a dimension of cue receptivity. As described above, the associations between conservative–liberal identity and attitudes have changed over time, as has also been the case with party identity (Baldassari & Gelman, 2008; Sugar, Viney, & Rohe, 1992). This finding is consistent with historical observations of variability in the political preferences associated with the conservative and liberal (or right and left) labels (e.g., Lipset, 1989; Shils, 1954). It is likely the case that the connections among diverse issue preferences are driven to a great extent by discourse indicating how stances go with both party affiliations and the conservative and liberal labels. Though party identity and ideological identity are strongly correlated nowadays ($r = .57$, $p < .001$, in the present Study 1 sample), they are distinguishable. It is important to note in this regard that whereas more Americans identify as Democrats than do as Republicans, more Americans identify as conservative than do as liberal (Ellis & Stimson, 2007). Thus, the influence of ideological identity, independent of party identity, on political preferences would seem to matter politically.

The argument that discursive surroundings and identities interact to influence political attitudes raises the question of what role ideology plays in political attitude adoption. The findings of Study 1 suggest that substantive ideological dimensions may be the strongest predictors of future attitudes. In other words, Study 1 generated strong evidence for value-based political attitude formation.

However, there is an important caveat to this finding: only some dimensions of ideology were important. In particular, inequality/social welfare ideology did not independently impact future issue stance in Study 1. This finding contributes to a base of evidence that, although distinct ideological dimensions are inter-correlated, there is value in multidimensional conceptualizations of ideology (Duckitt, Wagner, du Plessis, & Birum, 2002; Joseph et al., 2009; Shafer & Claggett, 1995; Stenner, 2005). It is likely that other new issue stances would have been influenced by different ideological dimensions. This suggests that understanding how attitudes on new political issues are formed requires considering both people's levels of *domain-specific ideologies* that are most relevant to the issues and the *identities* that people have committed to, both partisan and ideological. Moreover, the fact that these conceptually distinct ideologies are more strongly correlated with ideological identity than they are with one another suggests that there is something about ideological identity that leads people to organize diverse political views in a particular way. The present findings provide evidence that ideological identity may drive associations among narrower domain-specific ideologies because it nowadays represents a readiness to be persuaded be identity-matched sources.

Dispositional and Identity-Based Origins of Political Attitude Organization

This paper began with the observation that the configurations of political issue stances that nowadays prevail seem to be influenced by discourse (e.g., Layman et al., 2006). This is consistent with evidence of changing attitude-identity configurations across historical contexts (e.g., Baldassari & Gelman, 2008), the role of political knowledge in the structuring of political attitudes and identities

(e.g., Federico & Schneider, 2007), and the effects of political cues on attitude adoption (e.g., Cohen, 2003). However, other findings suggest that the broad political ideologies to which people are drawn are influenced by certain basic psychological dispositions, which are reliably correlated with the attitudes discussed in connection with the conservative–liberal dimension (Carney, Jost, Gosling, & Potter, 2008; Jost et al., 2003, 2008; Mondak & Halperin, 2008). Moreover, studies of attitude heritability tend to find strong heritable components to these political attitudes (Alford et al., 2005; Eaves et al., 1989; Verhulst, Hatemi, & Martin, 2010), presumably because genes bring about more abstract psychological dispositions that in turn attract people to specific political stances (Olson et al., 2001). This is powerful evidence for the importance of basic psychological dispositions in the formation of attitudes conceptualized on the conservative–liberal dimension. In a recent review, Jost et al. (2009) noted that an important challenge facing scholars of ideology is that of understanding the interaction of "discursive superstructure" and people's underlying needs and motives, largely dispositional, in determining attitude configurations.

The present findings, in conjunction with prior research, suggest that in order to meet this challenge it is important to note two points about the impact of dispositions on political attitudes. First, specific dispositional characteristics appear to relate primarily or exclusively with narrow ranges of political attitudes, rather than the full range of attitudes discussed in connection with the conservative–liberal dimension (Carney et al., 2008; Duckitt et al., 2002; Stenner, 2005; Verhulst et al., 2010). Second, a particular disposition may lead a person to adopt certain political stances in one cultural–historical context but not in another (e.g., Sugar et al., 1992)—for example, only in a context in which appeals for this issue stance by strategic political actors are made in a particular way that has relevance to the underlying disposition. Moreover, a cultural context can cause a particular issue stance to relate to a dispositional characteristic by creating a widespread belief that this issue stance "goes with" another issue stance (under common ideological and partisan labels) which is already associated with that disposition in that context.

Thus people who are dispositionally inclined to adopt one narrow range of political attitudes may come to adopt other "ideologically appropriate" attitudes merely because of identity commitments and exposure to discourse indicating which other attitudes are identity appropriate. For example, consider a basic psychological disposition (such as openness to experience) that may lead an individual to favor traditional modes of living. Within a context of information conveying that a traditionalist outlook "goes with" favoring low social welfare spending, under common ideological and partisan labels, possessing this predisposition to favor traditionalism may lead one to favor low social welfare spending as a result of discourse and identity-based social influence. This is so *even if there is no enduring aspect of human psychological make-up that would favor these two outlooks going together*. Rather, attraction to traditionalism based on one's psychological predispositions may lead one to adopt an identity as "conservative" and/or "Republican," and to in turn be persuaded by identity-matched sources to oppose social welfare spending. In the 1890s, when traditionalist outlooks were associated with the pro-social welfare interventionist Populist movement (Hofstadter, 1955), a

dispositionally rooted attraction to traditionalism may have lead people to favor *higher* social welfare spending because of discourse and identity-based social influence. The present findings coupled with prior research (e.g., Stenner, 2005) suggest that dispositions may have direct organic influences on some political attitudes, but only indirect identity- and discourse-based influences on other political attitudes.

Conclusion

The present findings suggest that identity-based social influence is to an important degree responsible for holding together the substantively diverse attitudes currently packaged under the labels of "conservative" and "liberal". Although dispositional factors likely attract people to narrow ranges of political attitudes, identity-based social influence seems to be responsible for conservative- and liberal-identifiers incorporating newly politicized issue stances into their packages of identity-appropriate attitudes. In other words, ideological identity functions similarly to party identity as a readiness to respond to political cues. Such responsiveness to political cues appears to involve adoption of substantive attitude-supportive beliefs, rather than mindless conformity. These findings not only highlight the important role of identity-based social influence in political attitude organization, but also the value of treating conservative–liberal *identity* as a distinct construct from conservative–liberal *ideology*.

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