

Political Orientation and Ideological Inconsistencies: (Dis)comfort with Value Tradeoffs

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Abstract People are often inconsistent in the way they apply their values to their political beliefs (e.g., citing the value of life in opposing capital punishment while simultaneously supporting abortion rights). How do people confront such inconsistencies? Liberals were more likely to say that issues that could draw on several competing values were complex issues that required value tradeoffs, whereas conservatives were more likely to deny the comparability of the issues. We argue that this difference is rooted in the distinct ways that liberals and conservatives represent political issues. Additional evidence suggested that conservatives' higher need for closure leads them to represent issues in terms of salient, accessible values. Although this may lead conservatives' attitudes to be more situationally malleable under some circumstances, such shifts do serve to protect an absolutist approach to one's moral values and help conservatives to deny the comparability of potentially inconsistent positions.

Keywords Ideological inconsistency · Political ideology · Value tradeoffs · Need for closure · Accessibility

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As an election nears, television viewers will find their commercial breaks increasingly filled with thirty-second spots explaining why an opposing candidate is inconsistent on issues and therefore unprincipled. President George H. W. Bush was criticized for denouncing economic protectionism while supporting agricultural subsidies. Senator Hillary Clinton's claims that she opposed a military approach against Iran were called into question by her vote to label the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps a foreign terrorist organization. Similarly, those who refer to the "value of life" to justify their opposition to capital punishment open themselves to criticism when they are simultaneously in favor of legalized abortion. In each of these cases, highlighting another person's inconsistencies is used to call into question his or her trustworthiness and commitment to principle.

Inconsistency can come in different forms. For one, people may be inconsistent in their beliefs across time—experiencing a "change of heart" or "flip-flopping." Also, people may not hold policy positions that are entirely consistent with the more abstract ideologies generally ascribed to them, insofar as they fail to know "what positions go with what" (Converse, 1964; Zaller, 1992; but see Jost, 2006, for a criticism of notion that most people are non-ideological). We are instead interested in circumstances in which two positions held by the same person are inconsistent because the two positions do not reflect the consistent application of an endorsed value. Given the presence of apparent inconsistencies in politicians, whose career longevity depends on avoiding such attacks, ideological inconsistency can be assumed to be even more commonplace among the general public. If inconsistencies are fodder for attacks in others but abound in the self, how do people perceive and respond to the inconsistencies that exist within their own belief system? We suggest that the answer to this question depends on a person's political ideology. Drawing on evidence that liberals and conservatives differ in their *need for cognitive closure* (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003a)—the desire to quickly formulate and firmly hold onto clear opinions in an effort to avoid confusion or ambiguity (Golec, 2002; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994)—we predicted that liberals and conservatives would represent political issues differently, and thus explain these inconsistencies in distinct ways. We expected that liberals would generally perceive such inconsistencies as the result of necessary value tradeoffs, whereas conservatives would define the related issues more narrowly in order to deny the comparability of the issues.

Ideological Inconsistencies

The question of how people perceive and respond to their own ideological inconsistencies presupposes that inconsistencies exist not only in the land of political rhetoric. There are several reasons to believe that ideological inconsistencies are widespread in the general public as well. First, political issues are complex, and depending on how they are framed, different values or principles become relevant. For example, abortion rights, embryonic stem-cell research, and capital punishment are all issues for which the inherent value of human life has been discussed as a relevant concern. But these issues also raise questions about the role

of governmental interference in personal choice, the importance of scientific progress, and the value of strong deterrents to crime. Given these competing demands of different, but relevant values on people's specific beliefs, it is not surprising that many people fail to consistently endorse or oppose the "pro-life" positions on all issues for which the value of life is relevant.

Furthermore, people do not arrive at their political positions by directly consulting their values to form a political position. For example, people rely to a great extent on the position of their political party in forming a position (Cohen, 2003), independent of the content of that position. Also, people's positions are often driven more by their reactions to what an issue *symbolizes*, even if this does not reflect a dispassionate analysis of the different political or moral values at stake (Sears, 1993). For example, capital punishment may symbolize a strong unwillingness to live in fear in a violent society, whereas abortion may symbolize the murdering of a defenseless child. These symbolic interpretations might prevent people from consistently taking the "pro-life" position: people may form attitudes according to their affective reactions to these symbols rather than the positions' resonance with the person's more abstract values. Because many issues can be associated with several relevant symbols, even issues with overlapping relevant values may come to symbolize different things, and thus evoke different reactions. In short, political attitudes are driven by more than just one relevant value, which means that political positions are unlikely to reflect a consistent application of one's values. As Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway (2003b) succinctly put it, "Over time, belief systems inevitably accumulate complexities and incongruities" (p. 387).

Need for Closure, Issue Representation, and Inconsistency Resolution

Although inconsistencies might occur equally often in liberals and conservatives, we contend that the two groups may resolve inconsistencies in different ways. More specifically, we believe that differences between liberals and conservatives in their *need for cognitive closure* lead the two groups to represent political attitudes differently, which then leads them to perceive and respond to their inconsistencies differently. Need for cognitive closure, part of Kruglanski's (1990) theory of lay epistemics, reflects a desire to quickly arrive at definite knowledge on a given topic and firmly hold on to these opinions to avoid an uncomfortable state of cognitive uncertainty (Jost et al., 2003a; Kruglanski, 1990).

Several findings regarding the need for closure converge to suggest that this individual difference may influence the way in which people represent political issues. Individuals who are high on the need for cognitive closure are known to "seize and freeze" on initially encountered information (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). In forming a position on an issue, people are likely to draw on a finite number of relevant values in formulating their position (Skitka & Mullen, 2002). As such, we predicted that in considering a political position, individuals who are higher on need for closure would be more likely to seize and freeze on a particularly salient value-framing of an issue without much further consideration of other values that could be relevant.

High need for cognitive closure (NFCC) has been shown to correlate with political conservatism (Jost et al., 2003a; Kimmmeier, 1997; Kossowska & van Hiel, 2003). As such, conservatives should possess a more singular representation of a political issue. To the extent that conservatives may have seized on separate values in defining two related issues, conservatives would be less likely to perceive their own conflicting positions as inconsistencies. For example, an abortion opponent who supports capital punishment may see the former issue as one of life and the latter one of supporting law and order. If people latch onto different values to define each issue, they should see the comparison between the two positions as irrelevant, thereby “resolving” (psychologically) the inconsistency. Individuals who are low on the need for closure should be more likely to continue to consider the relevance of other values that may define an issue instead of “seizing and freezing” on a salient value-framing. This would lead these individuals to have more nuanced, multifaceted representations of political issues, ones that acknowledge the relevance of multiple values. Liberals may therefore be more likely to accept ideological inconsistency as a necessary consequence of “value tradeoffs.”

These hypotheses are consistent with findings that the need for closure is related to specific worldviews that differ in their perception of the absolute versus relativistic nature of values (Golec de Zavala & Van Bergh, 2007). Individuals higher on the need for cognitive closure are attracted to worldviews that assume a definite nature of truth and a sense that values are absolutes. In contrast, individuals who are lower on the need for cognitive closure are more likely to endorse a “postmodern” perspective that centers around the idea of moral relativism. By seizing on a singular value in defining an issue, one can see an absolute justification for one’s position on the issue: one is acting consistently with the issue’s defining value. Individuals lower on the need for closure need not view their position in such absolutist terms. As a result, they may maintain more nuanced pictures of the issues and values at stake, and feel more comfortable with the notion that no single value is absolute, but that in certain contexts, one value may need to be sacrificed for the sake of another value.

Note that in this view the need for cognitive closure does not lead to the adoption of specific ideological content. Rather, it influences the form of that representation. Consistent with this notion, it has been posited that high need for closure individuals will seize on ideological positions that are highly accessible in a given context (Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Jost, Kruglanski, & Simon, 1999). For example, Kossowska and van Hiel (2003) found that in Poland, a country that was associated with economic liberalism and cultural conservatism, high need for closure was associated with conservatism for cultural issues only, not for economic issues. Thus, high need for closure individuals were more interested in maintaining the (presumably chronically) accessible status quo—independent of how liberal or conservative the actual policies were (but see Jost et al., 2003b, for a discussion of how the ability of a political belief to fulfill this psychological motive may not be so content-insensitive).

If high need for cognitive closure leads to simplified representations that help to protect one’s notion of absolute truths and that help to arrive quickly at definite knowledge, a paradoxical consequence is suggested: these more absolutist

individuals may actually show the greatest malleability in their positions. This is because individuals high on the need for cognitive closure will latch onto not only those values that are chronically accessible, but also those that are situationally accessible. In evaluating an anti-American essay, conservatives and liberals became relatively less and more tolerant, respectively, when high need for cognitive closure was induced by playing a concentration-disrupting noise (Jost et al., 1999). This suggests that the need for cognitive closure, by default, may lead people to rely on their chronically accessible ideological values.¹ However, when participants were reminded of their own valuation of tolerance—thus making the value of tolerance temporarily more accessible—an experimentally manipulated need for cognitive closure increased tolerance of the anti-America essay for all participants, regardless of their political ideology. In this last study, individual differences in political ideology were not measured and it is therefore unclear whether the prime simply reinforced the value among those who are more prone to embrace it (liberals), or whether—as we propose—even conservatives were quick to seize on this value in responding to the essay.

Although these studies have only looked at situational contexts that promote cognitive closure, we expected to observe parallel effects for individual differences in political ideology, which is known to correlate with the need for cognitive closure. By seizing on temporarily accessible values to represent an issue, conservatives can more easily deny that they are being inconsistent or compromising their values, ironically at the expense of a greater degree of attitude malleability. For example, for the issue of abortion, people with a high need for cognitive closure might typically “seize and freeze” on the value of life, ignoring their valuation of choice. If high need for cognitive closure individuals feel uncomfortable with the idea that they hold values that are only relative and at times must be violated (Golec de Zavala & Van Bergh, 2007), then a particularly troubling problem would arise for them in a context in which their own valuation of personal choice was made salient to them. In such a context, we might expect that people who are high on the need for cognitive closure would seize on the temporarily salient value of personal choice while thinking about the issue of abortion. In this way, the simplified representational style would continue to satisfy the need for cognitive closure, and the fact that one is trading off a value would not be particularly salient.

¹ Skitka, Mullen, Griffin, Hutchinson, and Chamberlin (2002) found that under cognitive load (which increases need for closure), liberals and conservatives became more similar instead of more polarized. Participants considered whether the government should subsidize AIDS medication for those who contracted the disease through risky sexual behavior. When not under cognitive load, liberals overrode their automatic negative reaction to such individuals and endorsed the subsidies, for the denial would be antithetical to their humanitarian values. It is not clear, though, that liberals in Jost et al.’s (1999) study had an automatic negative reaction to anti-American sentiment or that it was effortful for participants to recognize the relevance of the liberal ideal of “tolerance for dissent.” In short, need for cognitive closure should enhance reliance on chronically accessible values to the extent these values can be effortlessly applied to the judgment at hand.

Overview of Studies

If conservatives are more likely than liberals to represent values singularly and find a relativistic approach to moral values more troubling, then they should be more likely to react to a particular value inconsistency by claiming that the issues are about different values and thus not comparable. In contrast, if liberals are more comfortable avoiding cognitive closure and view political positions as a product of “value tradeoffs,” then they should resolve ideological inconsistency by claiming that because multiple values are relevant to every issue, such inconsistencies are to be expected because it is reasonable to weigh the values differently in different contexts. In Study 1, we tested whether liberals and conservatives who had resolved the tension between supporting either abortion or capital punishment, but not both, did so in ways consistent with our hypotheses. Our hypotheses for differences in approaching ideological inconsistency were premised on different ways in which we believed liberals and conservatives represented political issues. Studies 2 and 3 tested our hypothesis that conservatives (who tend to be higher on the need for closure) would seize on a temporarily salient value in guiding their thinking about an issue, thus (in the moment) maintaining consistency with their accessible values. Study 3 tested directly whether the influence of political orientation on susceptibility to situationally accessible value-framings would be mediated by the need for closure.

Study 1

Our first study tested whether conservatives and liberals differ in the way they report resolving ideological inconsistency. In Study 1, we decided to investigate two issues that have been noted to be potentially contradictory: support for versus opposition to abortion and capital punishment. Many conservatives oppose abortion and support capital punishment, while many liberals hold the opposite positions on both issues. Both patterns of belief can be said to reflect an inconsistent application of the valuation of human life: If one opposes either abortion or capital punishment, then he or she should also oppose the other issue, all other things being equal.

We predicted that conservatives would be more likely to define issues by seizing upon one particular issue-relevant value rather than multiple relevant values that make competing demands. This should lead conservatives to resolve inconsistency by seeing the two issues as defined by distinct values. For example, most social conservatives may latch onto the value of life in defining abortion, but not when considering capital punishment. Accordingly, conservatives should be relatively more likely to resolve inconsistency by denying the comparability of abortion and capital punishment, feeling that the comparison is “apples and oranges,” about different values. By contrast, we predicted liberals would be more likely to consider multiple values that are relevant to each issue. As such, liberals should be more likely to believe that competing values must be differentially weighted or “traded off” in forming a political position.

We also assessed the extent to which liberals and conservatives had “psychologically resolved” the apparent inconsistency of supporting either legalized

abortion or capital punishment, but not both. Because our hypotheses focus on liberals' and conservatives' own perceptions of resolving their inconsistency, we expected differences between liberals and conservatives to emerge only among those who had subjectively resolved the inconsistency in their own minds. For participants who had not resolved the conflict, we did not expect to see differences between liberals and conservatives.

Participants

One hundred and seven people were approached in downtown Ithaca, New York, and asked to complete a short survey. Participants received a piece of candy as a token of appreciation for their time.

Procedure

Consistent and Inconsistent Attitudes

Participants were first asked to indicate their positions on both abortion rights and capital punishment. Specifically, they were asked to indicate whether they considered themselves “Pro-choice” or “Pro-life,” and whether they believed that the death penalty should be abolished or that they favored capital punishment. Participants were forced to choose one side of each position so that we were able to look at participants who applied the value of life consistently by supporting both abortion and capital punishment or opposing both (*actually consistent*) and participants who applied the value of life inconsistently by supporting one but opposing the other (*actually inconsistent*).

Value Tradeoff Versus Comparability Denial

A short passage then explained that some people find the positions of many liberals and conservatives on these issues to be inconsistent. We mentioned that some people think that supporting abortion rights yet opposing the death penalty is inherently contradictory, and that a similar conflict exists between support for the death penalty and opposition to abortion. We then explained that “some argue that these are complicated issues that require consideration of competing values,” but that “others argue that it is not a fair comparison, that it’s like comparing ‘apples and oranges,’ and that the two issues are about distinct values.”

We then asked participants to what extent they agreed with each of two sentiments. The first item, designed to tap into the notion of value tradeoffs, read “These issues require people to reach their ultimate positions by trading off between different competing values.” The second item, which was meant to assess whether people denied the relevance of the comparison, read “Comparing positions on these issues is like comparing apples and oranges; they deal with separate issues.” Participants indicated their agreement with each item on scales ranging from 1 (not at all) to 6 (completely).

Perceived Conflict

To assess whether participants had or had not subjectively resolved this inconsistency, we asked them to what extent they believed that “these two positions are actually consistent with each other” using a 1 (not consistent) to 6 (actually consistent) scale. By using an even number of scale points, we could categorize participants into two groups: those who had resolved the conflict between the issues (4–6: *low conflict*) and those who still felt conflicted (1–3: *high conflict*).²

Political Affiliation

Finally, we asked participants to indicate their political affiliation on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (Democrat) to 7 (Republican).

Results

Sixty-five (59%) of 107 participants supported either abortion rights or capital punishment, but not both. These participants were identified as *actually inconsistent*, while the remaining participants were classified as *actually consistent*. Fifty-five participants (52%) of the 106 who answered the subjective inconsistency item indicated that they did not experience conflict between the two seemingly inconsistent positions. These participants were labeled *low conflict*, while the remaining participants were labeled *high conflict*. To create a variable indicating the relative preference for resolving the inconsistency by denying the comparability of the issues, as opposed to stating that at times it is necessary to make tradeoffs between competing values, we subtracted the value tradeoff item from the comparability denial item. Thus, higher scores on this composite reflect a greater tendency to see the issues as defined by distinct values, and lower scores reflect a tendency to see value tradeoff as necessary.³

We then regressed this composite on participants’ political affiliation (continuous, higher numbers reflecting more affiliation with Republicans), whether they found the stances to be conflicting (1 = high conflict, –1 = low conflict), whether their views were actually inconsistent (1 = actually inconsistent, –1 = actually consistent), the 3 two-way interactions, and the three-way interaction. There was a main effect of actual inconsistency, such that those participants who supported one of the two issues, but not both, were more likely to claim that the issues were not comparable, $\beta = .22$, $t(95) = 2.06$, $p = .04$. Also, there was a marginally significant main effect of political affiliation, such that Republicans were marginally more likely to claim

² We dichotomized this variable, because our hypotheses were based on differentiating those participants experiencing continued conflict versus those who had largely resolved the conflict. We did not predict, for example, that someone who had nearly resolved the conflict would have done so differently than someone who had entirely resolved the conflict.

³ Note that we do not claim that these strategies are mutually exclusive or that they even tap into the same underlying construct. Our hypotheses make predictions about what determines the relative reliance on one strategy versus the other.

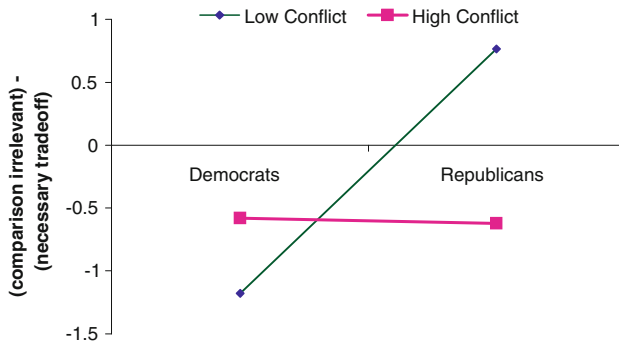


Fig. 1 Belief that abortion and capital punishment are not comparable issues, as opposed to multifaceted issues that demand value tradeoffs. Plotted values for Democrats and Republicans are those predicted at ± 1 standard deviation on the political affiliation variable (Study 1)

the issues were about distinct values as opposed to requiring a value tradeoff, $\beta = .21$, $t(95) = 1.93$, $p = .06$.

Consistent with our central hypothesis, the only two-way interaction to reach significance was the political affiliation \times perceived conflict interaction, $\beta = -.22$, $t(95) = 2.01$, $p = .05$. As can be seen in Fig. 1, for those who did perceive a conflict between the issues, political affiliation was not related to inconsistency resolution ($\beta = .00$). By contrast, for those who had psychologically “resolved” the conflict, Republicans were more likely to deny the relevance of the comparison and less likely to engage in value tradeoffs ($\beta = .42$). The three-way interaction was non-significant, $t < 1$, suggesting the significant two-way interaction did not depend on the actual consistency of the positions participants held. In other words, the influence of political orientation depended only on whether participants had subjectively resolved the inconsistency, not whether they had “objectively” done so.

Discussion

Study 1 suggested that liberals and conservatives may resolve value conflicts in different ways. Controlling for whether there was actual inconsistency in participants’ positions toward abortion and the death penalty, Republicans (conservatives) were more likely than Democrats (liberals) to deny the comparability of these issues rather than claim that these are complex issues that demand a tradeoff between different values. But this relationship between political affiliation and resolution of ideological conflict also depended on whether participants perceived a conflict between having “actually inconsistent” positions on abortion and the death penalty. For those who continued to experience conflict, political orientation did not predict how people responded to this conflict. But for those who had “resolved” the conflict, Republicans were more likely to do so by denying the comparability of the issues, whereas Democrats were more likely to claim that the issues were complex and required a tradeoff between competing values.

One limitation of Study 1 is that we simply asked participants how they believed they dealt with ideological inconsistency, but we did not directly observe the differences in how they represent political issues. We predicted that conservatives seize on single values in defining the issues of abortion and capital punishment, whereas liberals are more comfortable representing these issues as tradeoffs between competing values. It could be the case that conservatives and liberals represent the issues similarly, but that conservatives simply feel less comfortable explicitly admitting that they engage in value tradeoff. Study 2 was therefore designed to test whether conservatives would be more likely to seize on a particular value in defining an issue (abortion), which would provide more direct support for our hypothesis that liberals and conservatives represent political issues differently.

An alternative possibility is that conservatives are indeed less likely to engage in value tradeoffs, not because they seize on an easily accessible value in defining an issue, but because they have some other reason for why they think certain values are more important in one context than another. Tetlock's (1986) Value Pluralism Model makes predictions about how people reason when values come into conflict in guiding one's stance on a political position (see also Tetlock, Peterson, & Lerner, 1996). The model predicts that when people perceive conflict between close-to-equal values, they will engage in integratively complex reasoning in an attempt to make tradeoffs between values as they reach their final position on an issue. Thus, an alternative explanation for the results of Study 1 is that conservatives did not engage in value tradeoff because they did not see the two values as close-to-equal in importance.

Instead, our account predicts that in drawing on values to define an issue, conservatives are faster to seize on a salient value because of their higher need for closure (Jost et al., 2003a). Note that our prediction does not assume a unique match between a particular issue and a particular value. It is not that one value should necessarily and unconditionally trump the other value in importance. Instead, the likelihood that a specific value will be used to define an issue will be influenced by the situational (and chronic) accessibility of the value. Thus, in Study 2, the accessibility of values was manipulated through a priming task. We predicted that conservatives would seize on whichever value was temporarily salient, whereas liberals would be less influenced by the salient value.

Study 2

We hypothesized that conservatives would be more likely than liberals to deny ideological inconsistency because they would seize on different, single values in defining related issues. By not considering multiple perspectives that are potentially relevant to an issue, conservatives need not consider that they sometimes violate values they hold. If our account is true, then by varying the salience of a particular issue-relevant value, we should find that conservatives, more than liberals, seize on that value in thinking about the relevant issue. The study was designed to distinguish our account from an alternative hypothesis, namely that conservatives

report engaging in less value tradeoff because they are more likely to believe that one value is simply more important than another value in defining a particular issue (cf. Tetlock, 1986; Tetlock et al., 1996). Because this alternative is premised on a fairly fixed belief about the relative importance of a value in a certain context, it predicts that varying the salience of potentially competing values should not influence conservatives' (or liberals') attitudes.

Support for abortion rights can be seen as hinging on people's belief that the issue is primarily one of personal choice or one about the inherent valuation of human life. Accordingly, we first made salient to participants the value of life, choice, or (in a control condition) honesty. Then, we measured participants' attitudes toward several issues, including abortion rights. We predicted that conservatives would be more likely to seize on the primed value and would express attitudes toward abortion that were relatively more prime-consistent: more pro-abortion attitudes when *choice* was primed, and more anti-abortion attitudes when *life* was primed. Also, as evidence of this "seizing," we expected that by making one of the two values relevant to the abortion debate salient, conservatives would be more likely to seize on this value and state their attitude more quickly.

Participants and Design

One hundred and eleven undergraduates at the University of Colorado at Boulder participated in exchange for course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three value priming conditions: choice, life, or honesty (a control prime unrelated to abortion).

Procedure

First, all participants were presented with "a short writing task." Depending on experimental condition, participants read that "Most people [respect the inherent value of human life, believing it is an inherently good thing/respect individuals' rights to make their own choices on issues that affect their own lives/value being honest and telling the truth]." Participants were then asked to take a few minutes to write about how this value impacted their own thinking and actions. Participants were given a lined page on which to complete the priming task.

Then, participants were seated in front of a computer, where they learned they would be stating their attitudes toward several different political issues. Participants were told that an issue would appear on the screen, and they were to indicate their degree of support for the issue by typing a number to indicate the strength of their support or opposition: 1 (strongly oppose), 2 (moderately oppose), 3 (feel neutral/ambivalent), 4 (moderately support), and 5 (strongly support). The following five issues always appeared in the same order: privatize social security, repair coastal erosion, legalized abortion, affirmative action, the death penalty. The computer recorded the time in milliseconds it took participants to respond to each issue. To adjust for participants' general speed in measuring their time to respond to the abortion measure, we controlled for the average of the log-transformed time

participants took to answer the social security, erosion, and affirmative action items ($\alpha = .77$).⁴

After stating their position on these five issues, participants indicated their political orientation on 2 seven-point bipolar Likert-type scales. As in Study 1, one scale ran from 1 (Democrat) to 7 (Republican). The other scale went from 1 (liberal) to 7 (conservative). The two correlated significantly, $r(109) = .69, p < .001$; they were averaged to create a measure of political orientation, with higher scores reflecting greater conservatism.

Results

Attitude Toward Abortion

We predicted that choice- and life-primed conservatives would be more likely to seize on a salient value in formulating their attitude toward abortion, whereas liberals would not be as influenced by the prime. To examine this hypothesis, we tested whether conservatives' stated attitudes toward abortion were affected by the prime more than were liberals'.

First, we created a prime variable that indicated whether participants were in the Choice (−1), Honesty (0), or Life (1) condition. The weights reflect the ordering of consonance between the particular value and support for legalized abortion. After centering the continuous political orientation variable, we regressed participants' attitudes toward legalized abortion on their political orientation scores, prime, and the political orientation \times prime interaction term. A main effect of political orientation emerged, indicating that liberals were more supportive of legalized abortion than were conservatives, $\beta = -.40, t(107) = 4.64, p < .001$. But this main effect was qualified by the predicted political orientation \times prime interaction, $\beta = -.18, t(107) = 2.11, p = .04$. To insure that the linear contrast weights we used were most appropriate, we conducted a second regression analysis, but tested instead whether being primed with an issue-relevant prime influenced attitudes compared to the control, honesty prime: Choice (−1), Honesty (2), and Life (−1). The interaction term in this model did not approach significance, $t < 1$. As can be seen in Fig. 2, the significant interaction reflected the fact that conservatives assimilated their values in the direction of issue-relevant primes more than liberals did.

To further understand the nature of the interaction, we conducted simple slopes analyses to examine the expected influence of the prime for a participant who fell one standard deviation above or below the mean level of political orientation (Aiken & West, 1991). Conservative participants tended to assimilate their attitudes on abortion toward the primed value, $\beta = -.19, t(107) = 1.57, p = .12$. By contrast, liberal participants' attitudes tended to contrast away from the primed value, $\beta = .21, t(107) = 1.54, p = .13$. Thus, while neither simple slope was significant,

⁴ We did not include the death penalty reaction time in the covariate, given its relationship to the abortion attitude that was expressed earlier and its relation to the life prime.

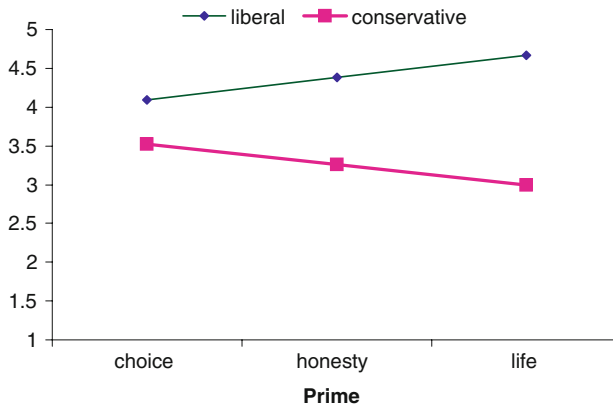


Fig. 2 Support for legalized abortion by political orientation and priming condition, as predicted by a regression model including each main effect and the two-way interaction. Plotted values for liberals and conservatives are those predicted at ± 1 standard deviation on the political orientation variable (Study 2)

the significant interaction reflected that conservatives' attitudes—more than liberals'—moved in the direction of the primed value.

Abortion Attitude Response Times

Conservatives' attitudes tended to shift toward the abortion position indicated by the prime, suggesting that these participants “seized” and “froze” on the representation of the issue suggested by the prime. We therefore predicted that the expression of the attitude would be facilitated in response to an issue-relevant prime (choice or life) compared to an issue-irrelevant prime (honesty). We were less clear *a priori* on how liberals would be influenced by the primes. One possibility was that the prime that was consistent with liberals' typical attitude (choice) would facilitate responding, whereas priming life would give them some pause. By contrast, it could be that their issue representations were generally less contextually variable, suggesting their response times would not be influenced by the prime at all.

To examine how political orientation and prime influenced the speed with which participants reported their attitude toward legalized abortion, we submitted the log-transformed abortion response times to an ANCOVA with political orientation (liberal or conservative)⁵ and prime (choice, honesty, life) as between-subjects factors and average response time and attitude toward abortion as covariates. As displayed in Fig. 3, the political orientation \times prime interaction was significant, $F(2, 103) = 4.26, p = .02$. To understand the nature of the interaction, we examined the influence of the prime separately for liberals and conservatives.

First, we performed a contrast comparing participants' response times when receiving either the choice prime (-1) or the life prime (-1) with when they received

⁵ The ANCOVA allowed us to test the omnibus interaction of political orientation and priming, but it required that we dichotomize the political orientation measure. To create a meaningful political orientation measure, participants whose average self-identification was on the liberal side of the scale were classified as liberals (55%), while the remaining participants were labeled conservatives (45%).

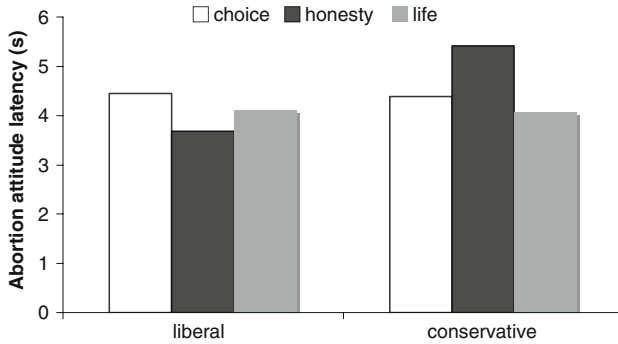


Fig. 3 Average response times to state one's attitude toward legalized abortion, in seconds (Study 2)

the control prime (+2). Whereas liberals' response times did not depend on whether they were exposed to an issue-relevant prime $t(105) = -1.64, p > .10$, conservatives reported their attitude more quickly when they were provided a value onto which they could seize and report their attitude, $t(105) = 2.50, p = .01$. A follow-up examination of conservatives' response times indicated that conservatives assigned to the control condition took longer to report their attitudes than did those who were presented with the choice prime, $t(105) = 2.00, p = .05$ or those presented with the life prime, $t(105) = 2.37, p = .02$. Conservatives' response times were equally facilitated, regardless of which prime they received, $t < 1$.

Discussion

Study 1 demonstrated that conservatives were more likely to resolve ideological inconsistency not by stating that value tradeoff is necessary, but by opposing the idea that the issues dealt with the same underlying values. This suggested that conservatives may be more likely to seize upon a particular value in defining an issue, which would help to disguise the relatedness of two actually related issues. Two findings from Study 2 supported this contention. First, conservatives, more than liberals, shifted their attitudes to be more consistent with the primed value. If conservatives were simply more likely to believe that one value is more important than another, then their attitudes should not have shifted as a function of the value's situational accessibility. Second, and consistent with the idea that conservatives would "seize" and "freeze" on the prime, when one of two values that define the abortion debate (choice or life) was made salient to people just before they offered their opinion on the abortion debate, conservatives' statement of their attitudes was facilitated. By contrast, liberals' attitudes were unaffected. We interpret this as indicating that conservatives seized upon the salient value in defining the abortion issue, facilitating statement of their attitude.

It is perhaps surprising that conservatives did not already have highly crystallized representations of abortion that would allow them to easily deny the relevance of the choice prime. But our findings are consistent with those of Ferguson (2008), who

showed that even conservatives became more in favor of same-sex marriage after being primed with words related to the value of equality. One explanation is that conservatives may be particularly likely to reject the importance of the value of choice to the abortion debate when they think about abortion in a partisan context that itself reinforces the connection between abortion and the value of life (which may be the typical context in which conservatives tend to consider abortion). But when the value of choice is made accessible before people call to mind the abortion issue, and choice is primed in a way that does not appear to be attempting to persuade people to change their attitudes (cf. Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953), conservatives' abortion attitudes may become surprisingly malleable.

One unexpected finding was that the prime \times conservatism interaction predicting attitudes was driven just as strongly by liberals' tendency to show a reverse-priming effect, contrasting their attitudes away from the salient value. It is possible that because liberals may be more likely to represent the abortion debate as relevant to both choice and life, they may be more likely to react against attempts to make one value more prominent than the other (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). Although not significant, liberals tended to be slower when exposed to the primes ($p = .10$), perhaps because their lower need for closure led them to spend a bit more time considering non-focal values as well. But given that this "reactance effect" was not replicated in Study 3, we adopt caution in generalizing from these results.

Our predictions in the first two studies have been premised on conservatives' tendency to be higher in their need for closure. Study 3 examined more directly whether it is individual differences in this cognitive-motivational style that explain conservatives' tendency to assimilate their abortion attitude toward a temporarily salient value.

Study 3

We have proposed that conservatives' greater need for closure is what leads them to be more likely to seize upon salient values in considering specific political issues. In Study 3, we measured participants' need for closure to determine whether conservatives' higher need for closure explains their susceptibility to value priming. We hypothesized that need for closure would fully mediate the interactive effect of political orientation and value prime in producing changes in attitudes on abortion.

Participants and Design

Fifty-six undergraduates at Cornell University participated in exchange for extra course credit. As in Study 2, participants were randomly assigned to one of three value prime conditions: choice, life, or honesty (control condition).

Procedure

As in Study 2, participants first took a few minutes writing about one of three values: choice, honesty, or life. Because there was a possibility that liberals may have reacted against the issue-relevant primes in Study 2, we modified the

instructions slightly. Now, the instructions for each condition began, “As part of a project on finding consensus in college students’ values, we have learned that what there is most agreement on is that....” In this way, it seemed less likely that the priming task was intended to persuade. After this opening statement, the instructions were identical to those used in Study 2.

Because in Study 2 we were interested in participants’ response latencies in stating their abortion attitudes, we measured attitudes with a constrained five-point scale that would facilitate fast responding. In the present study, we had participants indicate their attitudes toward abortion and nine other issues by writing a number between 0 (completely oppose) and 100 (completely support), inclusive.

Because we told participants that there was consensus on the primed value, a conceptual replication of Study 2 could instead be explained by an alternative mechanism: that conservatives are more conformist than liberals, being willing to adopt the values of their peer group. Accordingly, after stating their attitudes, we had participants indicate on seven-point scales the extent to which they endorsed the importance of the “inherent value of human life” and “an individual’s freedom to make their own choices that affect their own lives.” We subtracted the choice item from the life item to construct an index that tapped the relative importance of life to choice. In this way, we could test whether participants were shifting their explicit adherence to these values as a result of the primes.

Finally, participants were presented with the terms Democrat, Republican, liberal, and conservative. They were asked to check those terms that were appropriate in defining who they were. For those items they checked, they indicated how strongly they identified with the label on nine-point Likert-type scales, such that higher numbers indicated stronger identification. All unchecked items were coded as zero. We created an index of conservatism by subtracting Democrat and liberal from Republican and conservative.

Participants also completed a 16-item abridged Need for Closure Scale (see Appendix for abridged scale; see Webster & Kruglanski, 1994, for full scale). Two items were foils. Of the remaining 14 items, two items reduced the internal reliability of the scale. These items correlated with the remaining items at a similar level as did the foils. Both of these items—“I get very upset when things around me aren’t in their place” and “When I find myself facing various, potentially valid alternatives, I decide in favor of one of them quickly and without hesitation”—were excluded. We standardized and summed the remaining 12 items, which demonstrated good internal reliability ($\alpha = .78$).

Results

All regression analyses are summarized in Table 1. As before, we coded the prime variable for which choice, honesty, and life were coded as -1 , 0 , and 1 , respectively.⁶ We then centered the political orientation variable. To determine if

⁶ In Studies 2 and 3, we also tested for the orthogonal issue-relevant versus control prime effect using the weights: choice (-1), honesty ($+2$), and life (-1). While this contrast produced no significant effects in

conservatives were once again affected by the value primes more than were liberals, we regressed attitude toward legalized abortion on conservatism, the prime condition, and the prime \times conservatism interaction. Again, a significant main effect of political orientation indicated that liberals were more supportive of abortion rights than were conservatives, $t(52) = 4.22, p < .001$. This main effect was marginally qualified by a conservatism \times prime interaction, $\beta = -.21, t(52) = 1.78, p = .08$.

To examine the nature of the interaction, we conducted simple-slopes analyses to determine the expected influence of the prime for participants who were one standard deviation above and below the mean score on political orientation. As can be seen in Fig. 4, conservatives' attitudes toward abortion were significantly assimilated toward the primed value, $\beta = -.32, t(52) = 2.17, p = .03$. By contrast, liberals' attitudes were not influenced by the prime, $\beta = .07, t < 1$.

We hypothesized that conservatives' attitudes would be influenced by value priming because they have a higher need for closure. To examine this proposal, we first regressed need for closure on conservatism. Consistent with past research (Jost et al., 2003a), conservatism was positively related to need for closure, $\beta = .32, t(54) = 2.46, p = .02$. Next, we regressed participants' abortion attitudes on the prime, need for closure, and the prime \times need for closure interaction terms. Although neither main effect reached significance, $ts < 1.03, ps > .30$, there was a significant prime \times need for closure interaction, $\beta = -.41, t(52) = 3.19, p = .002$. The interaction reflected a tendency for those with a high need for closure to shift their abortion attitudes to be more consistent with the primed value.

Finally, we regressed abortion attitudes on the prime, conservatism, need for closure, prime \times conservatism, and prime \times need for closure interaction terms. Again, the only significant main effect was one of conservatism, with liberalism being associated with greater support for legalized abortion, $\beta = -.48, t(50) = 4.20, p < .001$. More importantly, while the prime \times need for closure interaction remained significant, $\beta = -.33, t(50) = 2.84, p = .01$, the prime \times conservatism interaction was not significant, $\beta = -.13, t(50) = 1.13, p > .26$. A marginal Sobel test lent support to the full mediation model, $z = 1.86, p = .06$. Simple slopes analyses demonstrated that while those with a high need for closure (1 SD above the mean) assimilated their stated attitudes toward the primed value, $\beta = -.40, t(50) = 2.75, p = .01$, those with a low need for closure (1 SD below the mean) were not significantly influenced by the prime, $\beta = .29, t(50) = -1.59, p > .11$.

Finally, to make sure that those with a high need for closure were not simply more persuaded by a value for which we claimed there was "the most consensus," we regressed participants' relative endorsement of the value of life to the value of choice on the prime, need for closure, and the prime \times need for closure interaction term. Suggesting that the primes did not increase commitment to the values themselves,

Footnote 6 continued

Study 2, there was a marginal interaction of political orientation and this irrelevant/relevant prime coding in predicting attitudes toward abortion in Study 3, $t(52) = 1.90, p = .06$, reflecting a tendency for the choice prime to influence attitudes more than the life prime. But crucially, this prime weighting did not interact with need for closure in predicting attitudes, $t(52) = 1.20, p > .23$, suggesting the interaction with political orientation was independent of the effect mediated through the need for closure.

Table 1 Regression analyses for the proposed mediation model (Study 3)

| | β | $t(df)$ | p |
|---------------------------------------|---------|---------|-------|
| Attitude toward abortion | | | |
| Political conservatism | -.49 | 4.22 | <.001 |
| Prime | -.12 | 1.07 | .29 |
| Political conservatism \times prime | -.21 | 1.78 | .08 |
| Need for closure | | | |
| Political conservatism | .32 | 2.46 | .02 |
| Attitude toward abortion | | | |
| Need for closure | -.13 | 1.03 | .31 |
| Prime | -.05 | .39 | .69 |
| Need for closure \times prime | -.41 | 3.19 | .002 |
| Attitude toward abortion | | | |
| Political conservatism | -.48 | 4.20 | <.001 |
| Need for closure | .04 | .34 | .74 |
| Prime | -.05 | .48 | .64 |
| Political conservatism \times prime | -.13 | 1.13 | .26 |
| Need for closure \times prime | -.33 | 2.84 | .01 |

Note: Prime is coded as: choice (-1), honesty (0), life (+1)

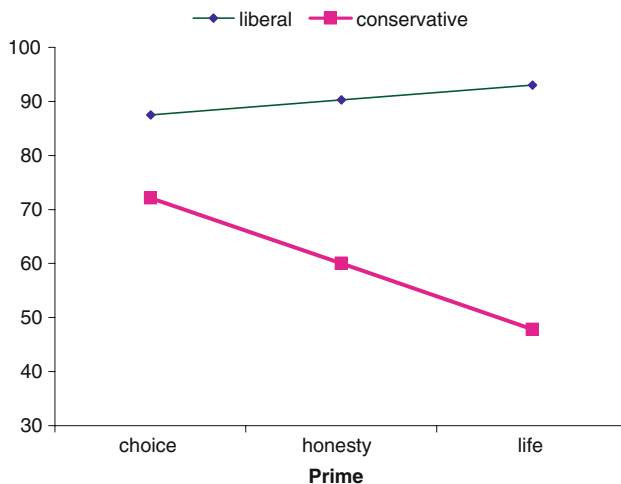


Fig. 4 Support for legalized abortion by political orientation and priming condition, as predicted by a regression model including each main effect and the two-way interaction. Plotted values for liberals and conservatives are those predicted at ± 1 standard deviation on the political orientation variable (Study 3)

none of these effects approached significance, $t_s < 1$. This rules out the alternative that conservatives were merely more conformist than liberals, or that conservatives endorsed these values with more hesitation or ambivalence, a state that makes people especially conformist to majority opinion (Cavazza & Butera, 2008).

Discussion

Study 3 demonstrated that the tendency for conservatives' attitudes to be more influenced by value priming is mediated by their heightened need for closure. When one of two values that are relevant to the abortion debate was made salient, those with a relatively higher need for closure were more likely to seize on this value and state an abortion attitude more consistent with it. It was liberals' and conservatives' differences in their relative needs for closure that explained the effect of value priming on their attitudes.

General Discussion

It is unlikely that people will always hold political positions that consistently cohere with their values. As such, inconsistencies in people's personal ideologies are almost assured. We expected that liberals and conservatives would approach this inconsistency differently. Liberals resolved the conflict by conceding the necessity of value tradeoff and compromise. Conservatives did so by denying the comparability of issues (in this case, abortion and capital punishment), claiming that in actuality they were about distinct values. Two additional studies suggested that differences in ways that liberals and conservatives represent political positions may underlie these two different responses to ideological inconsistency. We found that conservatives represent issues more singularly, which may help them to see fewer inconsistencies in their political positions. More specifically, when a particular issue-relevant value was made salient, conservatives quickly seized on this value and stated an attitude that was more consistent with it. Liberals were generally unaffected by the value primes. In Study 3, we found that it was conservatives' greater need for closure that led their attitudes to be more influenced by situationally salient values.

There is an apparent paradox in that, on one hand, individuals who are high in the need for cognitive closure are known to be rigid adherents to the status quo (Kossowska & van Hiel, 2003), but in our studies, we found that higher need for closure participants displayed greater attitude malleability. One way of reconciling the apparent inconsistency is that while it may be more difficult to convince high need for closure individuals to endorse new values or to abandon their old values, such individuals may be more intertemporally variable in what values they see as relevant to particular issues. Instead, when attempting to convince people of the importance of values they do not already endorse, one might expect to observe greater malleability in the positions of liberals and those lower in a need for closure. In our studies, both liberals and conservatives were equally supportive of the values of life and choice. What we were able to influence was which issue-relevant value was seized upon in guiding a particular attitude. Our effects did not demand that participants accept a value or principle that they otherwise rejected, which may help explain why high need for cognitive closure individuals displayed such malleability.

Given that conservatives are more likely to possess absolutist worldviews that posit the definite nature of truth and the inviolable nature of values, conservatives'

malleable attitudes may be quite adaptive, allowing them to maintain faith in their absolutist values. By seizing upon situationally salient issue-relevant values, conservatives may satisfy their need for closure by quickly formulating their position in the moment and by avoiding the recognition that they are violating their “absolutist” values. In this way, maintaining a subjective sense of consistency between one’s values and policy positions may actually require a degree of intertemporal inconsistency. As one value becomes more situationally prominent, shifting one’s attitude to be more consistent with this value requires such malleability, but also obscures the imperfect association between one’s values and attitudes.

Note that the greater singularity with which conservatives represent issues does not necessarily imply that conservatives have a smaller pool of possible values on which to draw. In fact, Haidt and Graham (2007) have argued that while liberals’ moral convictions are based primarily on principles of harm and fairness, conservatives have three additional bases of moral intuitions—in-group loyalty, concern for purity, and respect for authority. While conservatives may have a greater number of principles from which their moral intuitions can draw, this does not imply that for any particular issue conservatives’ representations will be broad-based. In terms of the present research, even though conservatives may have more values on which they can “seize and freeze” in forming a position on an issue, this does not mean that all potentially relevant values will be drawn upon in formulating any given opinion. One might expect that conservatives’ larger pool of values would create a lot more variability in conservatives’ attitudes compared to liberals’, given that there may be a greater variety of foundations on which they can “seize and freeze.” But to the extent that conservatives in general may come to agree on which value is most relevant in defining an issue, the variability of issue representations (and thus of positions) may not be so great after all. Our reasoning does suggest that when an issue first enters public awareness (before there is some consensus about which value is central in defining an issue), there may be greater heterogeneity in the opinions of conservatives than of liberals.

Accessibility Versus Worldview Defense

We have argued that two aspects of the need for cognitive closure help to explain liberals’ and conservatives’ different ways of resolving cognitive inconsistency and representing political issues. First, we have argued that those with a high need for cognitive closure (NFCC) possess worldviews that see values as absolutes that need to be followed regardless of the specific situation. Second, we have said that those with a high NFCC are more likely to seize on particularly accessible values or frames in considering political positions. Likely, these two phenomena work in tandem. A need for closure leads to more singular, simplistic representations of political issues, which makes it less likely that an absolute worldview will be violated. But when violations are made salient and discomfort is felt, a tendency to have singularly defined positions is reinforced as people may seize on a different value to define the conflicting position.

There are ways to empirically determine which of these two phenomena is operating at different stages in the inconsistency resolution. For example, by examining an issue for which participants feel less committed to the competing issue-relevant values, an effect of value priming on political stance would be more easily explained by accessibility than worldview defense. If participants do not feel strongly committed to the values, high NFCC individuals should be less uncomfortable with violating them. The way we primed the values—by having participants explain why *they* felt the value was important—both made the value itself accessible and highlighted their personal endorsement of the value. If the value of life or choice were primed without calling participants' attention to their own personal valuation of the value (e.g., through a subliminal prime), and this did *not* produce a value priming effect, then this would be evidence that it is worldview defense that is driving the priming effect obtained in the present research. This would suggest that it is highlighting one's potential for violating one's own values that drives the effect, not the mere accessibility of the value.

Cognitive Dissonance Reduction

The question of how cognitive inconsistency is dealt with is a topic that has been addressed extensively by Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957). Positing that inconsistencies produce an aversive state called *dissonance*, Festinger noted three ways by which people could resolve this inconsistency. First, people could change one of their dissonant cognitions. Second, people could trivialize the importance of a violated condition, thus deciding that the inconsistency is relatively unimportant. Finally, people might add a consonant cognition that helps to make the inconsistency seem more justifiable.

As we argued earlier, even if one attempts to resolve the inconsistency by changing one of the dissonant cognitions, it is unlikely that internal consistency in one's ideological beliefs will be realized. Likewise, we do not have evidence that participants trivialized the importance of their values. If they had, we might have expected that after stating a position (e.g., opposition to abortion) that violated a value (e.g., choice), they would have later claimed that this value was less important. Participants in Study 3 did not use this strategy; instead, participants in all conditions maintained a very high commitment to the value of both choice and life in all three priming conditions, averaging a mean endorsement of at least 6.2 (out of 7) for both values.

Liberals' strategy may be seen as a variation of adding a consonant cognition. Just as those who eat a high trans fat meal may see the enjoyment derived from the meal (the added consonant cognition) as justifying the risk to their health (the dissonant cognition), liberals concede the relevance of multiple values but say that their position-consistent value simply outweighs the violated value. By contrast, conservatives feel less comfortable with this tradeoff, and instead are motivated to deny the actual dissonant nature of the comparison. Although our studies have shown that conservatives' higher need for cognition and simplified issue representations aid in this strategy, it is not clear whether denying the inconsistency is a reaction to the dissonant cognitions—one that is distinct from the strategies

Festinger outlined—or whether it instead helps to prevent the dissonance from ever being experienced to begin with. Future research could distinguish between these alternatives.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although our hypotheses were not directly premised on the issues of abortion or capital punishment, we cannot rule out the possibility that the findings summarized in this paper might be particularly strong for or unique to these issues. To increase confidence in our theoretical explanations, it would be useful to replicate these effects with respect to other issues. The appropriateness of waterboarding and other extreme interrogation techniques hinges on a tension between the unacceptability of torture and issues of national security. Energy policy concerns a tradeoff between a commitment to the environment and potential economic consequences of environmental regulation. Immigration policy requires a balance between humanitarian concern for those who desire to enter or remain in a country and the cost to the citizens of that country to take in such people. To the extent that there is general consensus that these values are both legitimate in their own right and relevant to the policies in question, we should expect similar patterns of results with conceptual replications that use these issues and values.

While Study 1 was conducted using a community sample, it would be useful to investigate the effects of political ideology on perceptions and responses to ideological inconsistencies using a more heterogeneous sample. Although that would be the only sure way to demonstrate the generality of the effect, there are at least two reasons to think that our effects may be even stronger in a non-student sample. First, our samples were slightly left-leaning in general. Thus, conservatives in our sample were probably lower in the need for cognitive closure than might be observed in the population-at-large, which actually made it more difficult to find evidence in support of our hypotheses. Second, because the college environments themselves were fairly liberal, conservatives were likely more often called upon to justify their positions than were liberals. As Gross and Ellsworth (2003) have highlighted, attitudes are most likely to change when there is relatively little public discourse on issues, rather than when a public dialogue forces people to defend, and thus reinforce, their own beliefs. To the extent that conservatives were more likely to have been called upon to defend their positions, they may have been more inoculated against persuasive attempts (cf. McGuire, 1964). Thus, we may have actually seen less malleability in conservatives' beliefs than would be observed in a more nationally representative sample.

One implication of our findings is that conservatives may be more easily influenced by message framing than are liberals. Lakoff (2004, 2006) has argued that conservatives currently have a kind of monopoly on political language, having developed effective frames that offer conservative values in a quite positive light (e.g., tax cuts as “tax relief,” the War in Iraq as the “war on terror”). Although Lakoff has argued that conservatives' dominance can be attributed to a massive investment in conservative think tanks that have perfected political rhetoric, our

results suggest the asymmetry in use of these strategies may also stem from the increased effectiveness of message framing on conservative recipients. If so, this suggests that conservatives should be particularly concerned about their members' being exposed to alternative frames or dissenting views. Consistent with this notion, Kruglanski, Pierro, Mannetti, and De Grada (2006) argued that those who are higher in a need for cognitive closure show evidence of *group-centrism*—a “syndrome” that includes pressures toward attitude uniformity, rejection of deviates, and the perpetuation of group norms. In the laboratory, where the experimenter can break through the impediments of group-centrism and present participants with position frames of their own choosing, we might find that conservatives are particularly influenced by liberal message frames (as in Studies 2 and 3), even as these frames are not particularly effective on independents. Thus, liberals' attempts at message framing (e.g., reterming the minimum wage the “living wage,” calling the national debt the “baby tax”) may not be inherently inferior rhetorical strategies, but they may not be getting through to the most persuasive audience members.

Conclusion

Differing in their needs for cognitive closure, liberals and conservatives react to ideological inconsistencies in separate ways. By seizing on situationally salient values to guide their positions on political issues, conservatives can satisfy their need for closure both by quickly formulating a political position and by deemphasizing ways in which their policy positions are inconsistent with their values. Although this article focused on one implication of differences in how liberals and conservatives represent political positions, we hope that future research will uncover additional consequences of these differing representational styles.

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Appendix: Abridged Need for Closure Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

1. In case of uncertainty, I prefer to make an immediate decision, whatever it may be.
2. [#]When I find myself facing various, potentially valid alternatives, I decide in favor of one of them quickly and without hesitation.
3. ^{*}I have never been late for work or for an appointment.
4. I prefer to decide on the first available solution rather than to ponder at length what decision I should make.
5. [#]I get very upset when things around me aren't in their place.

6. Generally, I avoid participating in discussions on ambiguous and controversial problems.
7. When I need to confront a problem, I do not think about it too much and I decide without hesitation.
8. When I need to solve a problem, I generally do not waste time in considering diverse points of view about it.
9. I prefer to be with people who have the same ideas and tastes as myself.
10. Generally, I do not search for alternative solutions to problems for which I already have a solution available.
11. I feel uncomfortable when I do not manage to give a quick response to problems that I face.
12. *I have never hurt another person's feelings.
13. Any solution to a problem is better than remaining in a state of uncertainty.
14. I prefer activities where it is always clear what is to be done and how it needs to be done.
15. After having found a solution to a problem I believe that it is a useless waste of time to take into account diverse possible solutions.
16. I prefer things that I am used to over those I do not know and cannot predict.

Note: * Foils; # excluded items.

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