

Quarterly Journal of Ideology

*A Critique of Conventional Wisdom
An electronic journal at:
www.lsus.edu/la/journals/ideology*

Conservatism and Concern for the Environment

Richelle S. Allen and Emanuele Castano
New School for Social Research

and

Priscilla D. Allen
Louisiana State University

ABSTRACT

The current ideology of the United States justice system leans toward more rights for victims. This study explored whether attitudes toward the natural environment are affected by self-reported conservatism. Political ideology was measured with three items measuring general, social and fiscal conservatism/liberalism. Environmental attitudes were measured by using LaTrobe and Ascot's (2000) Modified New Environmental Paradigm (NEP)/Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP). The NEP/DSP considers four factors: human interference with nature; equity and development issues; humans and economy over nature; duties to nonhumans. An interesting pattern of findings emerge, showing that fiscal conservatism is negatively associated with environmental attitudes, even when controlling for region, gender and age, that is for variables that tend to be associated with conservatism.

Key words: Political ideology and environment; conservatism, liberalism, environmental concern, New Environmental Paradigm, Dominant Social Paradigm

INTRODUCTION

If a continuum exists where conservative thinking is diametrically opposed to liberal thinking, then differences in approaching critical issues should reflect these opposing philosophies (Jost, 2003). In this research, we aim to find whether political ideology affects attitudes toward the natural environment. In addition to our focus on the effects of political self-identification on environmental attitudes, we investigate demographic data in relation to the participants' identification with political ideology. Determining whether there are tangible differences between the people that hold one political view over the other might lead to further insight into the reasons for the apparent polarity of perspective. Therefore, gender, age and geographical region were analyzed in relation to general, social, and fiscal political stance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study using self-reported measures establishes new territory in the study of political ideology and behavior/attitudes toward the environment and social/fiscal issues. Conover (1981) is one of the first social scientists to examine political-ideological identity. Since the 1980's, Conover and her colleagues have been productive in refining the ambiguous study of political schemas in the United States (US) and beyond this country's borders (1991) and how it relates to democracy in contemporary life (Searing, Conover, & Crewe, 2003). Conover and Searing (2005) note how ordinary people practice political participation in everyday discussions and as having a relationship to one's civic responsibility. Previous literature has cited significant connections between age and conservatism (Pollak, 1943; Schneider, 2003), controversially suggesting that people have

historically become generally more conservative as they age. In examining gender and conservatism, Conover and Sapiro (1993) identified difference between men and women's ideological views, finding women to identify as less partisan than men, and more opposed to war.

Social Ecology and Environmental Concern

So what are the primary influences to shape one's ideological perspective? Social scientists look to theory related to the social environment and the ecological perspective as largely influencing perspective and behavior (Germain & Gitterman, 1987). The ecological perspective, also referred to as person-in-environment, may in part speak to the manner in which humans interact with their environment, and how the environment shapes behavior, preferences, and experience. Person-in-environment poses that people and their behavior are inextricably linked to the multi-layered systems in which they have been exposed. Positions of family may be one level of influence, and the trends, cultures, and traditions prominent in the geographic region may be another. New York and Louisiana, the two states from which data were gathered, have stark differences in many respects. One traditional reality is that families in the Deep South are more likely to stay for multiple generations than families in Northern metropolitan areas. New York City is comprised of more persons who have migrated to a metropolitan area, and New York City has a reputation for being one of the more liberal big cities (Move Left, 2007). Clearly, cities are made up of heterogeneous groups of people, so geography and ideology is not that clear cut. Still, Baton Rouge, Louisiana has a higher concentration of political and religious conservatism than New York. Ideological perspective rests on a whole host of factors including education, religious and cultural beliefs, which may transfer to dominance in thinking.

Ideological Identity

While it may be beyond this study's capability to define the ideals held in the schema of "conservatism" or "liberalism," we started with acknowledging the notion that many Americans tend to identify with one or the other. The categories of liberalism and conservatism are, indeed, not one-dimensional. These terms have completely different meanings throughout the world. In the US, the implication of these words are ever changing and these loosely structured categories are likewise expanding to hold loosely structured subcategories that may appear contradictory to the original ideology. Generally, at this time in the U.S., putting aside terms such as "neo-conservative," "compassionate conservative," and so on, we can consider the self-identification of generally conservative, generally liberal, socially conservative, socially liberal, and fiscally conservative, fiscally liberal. These philosophies are each thought of as a continuum (extreme conservatives are to the far-right, extreme liberals to the far-left).

Conservatism and Liberalism Defined

Gilbert and Terrell (2005) differentiate between conservatism and liberalism by highlighting the collective vs. individualistic approach to responding to social problems. Conservatives tend to believe that society is better when private action and individual interests govern, whereas liberals tend to believe that the collective perspective recognizes a mutuality of social action to change social problems (Gilbert & Terrell, 2005). In terms of environment, a laissez faire approach institutes less governmental regulation over such realities as industry, however, long term implications to such environmental issues are becoming more commonly handled with a less partisan approach and a more collective one.

Also, environmental responsibility falls into the arena where people feel that they have a personal responsibility to control the situation – the more responsibility people feel, the more likely they are to want it to change (Ewert & Baker, 2001) these perspectives may also have ecological underpinnings as we are all products of our socio-political environment.

Because the two very different sub-categories of conservatism are neither mutually inclusive nor mutually exclusive, we were interested in finding which type of conservatism or liberalism, social or fiscal, is more salient in self-identification as generally liberal or generally conservative. This idea was also discussed in Conover's (1981) theory of meaning in identity: "Some people...might define ideological labels almost exclusively in terms of social issues while, at the same time, others may base their interpretation entirely on economic issues" (p. 154). By asking participants to rate themselves on these three scales (general, social, and fiscal conservative scale¹), we hoped to illuminate how participants rate their perspective in each respective area.

The suggestion that self-identified conservatives are less concerned than liberals about environmental issues arose from research surrounding the character of the political conservative. The proposed aspect of conservatism seems to be linked to the *Dominant Social Paradigm*, which is part of the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP)/Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) (LaTrobe & Ascot, 2000). It is in this context that we expected to see conservative ideology's effect on environmental attitudes. Jost (2003) describes the *tolerance for inequality* in reference to the belief in a hierarchy among humans. However, we hypothesize that if it were true that *tolerance for inequality* is necessarily a tendency of conservatives, they would subscribe to the hierarchy of nature as well, humans being above all.

For the sake of this research, it is necessary to limit the definitions of the three political ideologies to today's most popular understanding of the terms. The history of liberalism and conservatism must be considered in doing so. It also must be recognized that it is possible to be an American without identifying with either one of these positions. However, a degree of generalization was necessary in order to research the manifestations of these ideologies by Americans who actually identify with them.

The assumption that apathy toward environmental protection is an intrinsic belief of conservatives in part stems from the policies of current political platforms. President George W. Bush, a "compassionate conservative" arguably prioritizes fiscal concerns over environmental concerns. His administration has endorsed such policies as lowering limits on pollution that harm the ozone, eliminating vehicle tailpipe inspections, and allowing corporations to keep certain information about environmental toxins confidential (Moyers, 2005).

Environmental Attitudes: Measures

The NEP/DSP was used to test environmental attitudes in this study. The NEP (Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978) was designed in the late seventies (in response to the DSP) to account for aspects of the new western consciousness. In that time, there was increasing concern towards damage to the natural environment caused by technology. The NEP assumes that this concern is prevalent. The NEP consists of 12 statements reflecting perspective and consequences relative to human-environment relationships (Ewert & Baker, 2001).

As the consciousness of an entire nation shifts, it is understandable that the perception of a group within the nation would be altered as well. However, it seems that the NEP

measures the degree of our proposed liberal attitude towards the environment (desire to restrict growth and to preserve a harmonious relationship between humans and the rest of nature), while the DSP measures attitudes that reflect some of the traits of conservative thought. Below are the three factors of the DSP (reprinted by Albrecht, 1982):

1. A belief in limitless resources, continuous progress, and the necessity of growth.
2. Faith in the problem-solving abilities of science and technology.
3. Strong emotional commitment to a laissez-faire economy and to the sanctity of private property rights.

Although merging the DSP with the NEP dilutes these factors, the items are still effective in measuring tendencies toward conservative or liberal thought. A high score on the NEP/DSP would coincide with conservative thought.

To further explain the hypothesis that the three DSP (limitless resources, problem-solving capability of science, belief in laissez faire economy) factors above would correspond to conservative thought while the NEP factors (balance of nature, limits to growth loading and equality of man and nature) would tend to reflect liberal ideals, we will discuss some of the literature highlighting the characteristics of liberal vs. conservative thought.

Economic conservatives are considered “pro-progress” when it comes to industrialization (Moyers, 2005). This aspect of the subset of conservatism seems to be contradictory to the “resistance to change” of social conservatives. It is important to recognize that the defining factors of social conservatism involve attitudes toward morals and tradition, while the defining factors of fiscal conservatism involve private property laws, small government, and economic conservation with a desire for progress of material gain.

We expect that the belief in limitless resources would prove to be more of a conservative tendency than a liberal one. This belief, however, is not echoed in the characteristics of the social conservative; therefore, we would expect that we would see this more in general and fiscal conservatives.

Faith in the problem-solving abilities of science and technology would also seem to be more of a conservative tendency based on Jost's theory that conservatives have a need to avoid uncertainty. Hofstede's dimensions of uncertainty avoidance includes putting one's worries into the hands of an expert.

To illustrate the stereotypical conservative's commitment to the *sanctity of private property rights*, we refer to Shaw's (2003) *Private Property Rights, not Ideologies, are the Crux*: "Conservatives see nature as a place of human action. Only humans make decisions about the treatment of nature; nature itself makes no conscious choices." It might be scientifically true, that the rest of nature is not conscious. However, it is the stark distinction between nature and humans, and the clear statement that it is ours (or at least it belongs to the people who are rich enough to own land) to do what we will with it, that seems to resonate in the conservative consciousness.

Human Behavior and the DEP/DSP

LaTrobe and Acott's (2000) Modified NEP/DSP involves four factors that are relevant to this research because they rest on their own continuums, each seeming to correspond to aspects of conservative and liberal disagreement: *Human Interference with Nature; Equity and Development Issues; Humans and Economy over Nature; Duties to Nonhumans*. These four factors allow us to hone in on specific differences in attitude

between ideologies. The relationship between people and the rest of nature differs with perspective, and perspectives are perhaps mediated by political ideology.

In reference to the hypotheses of connection between demographics and political ideology, these emanate from commonly held ideas, such as, women are more liberal than men, older people are more conservative than younger people, and northerners are more liberal than southerners. While scientific data on the connections between demographics and political ideology is sparse, these assumptions seem to be commonplace in the U.S., at least since the 1980s, (before that, women were considered to be more conservative than men (Schneider, 2003). Therefore, the NEP and DSP allow for a measure of two extremes of the environmental attitude spectrum. That polarity, we hypothesize, would coincide with the liberal—conservative continuum that we see represented in American consciousness.

Gender and Ideology

Women are generally considered the more socially compassionate of the two sexes. Eagly (2004) found that women were more likely than men to endorse social liberal policies. This finding supports that women would be both more socially and fiscally liberal, in the mindset that socially liberal policies often necessarily involve fiscally liberal ideals. Eagly (2004) cites housing, childcare, educational opportunity, and welfare among policies more often supported by women than men. These all affect disadvantaged people and each mentioned issue involves big government ideology. From this literature, it would logically follow that women would prove to be more generally, socially and fiscally liberal than men.

Political Ideology and Age

Throughout the history of political ideology in America, liberal ideology has consistently been more prevalent among younger generations and more conservative among

older generations. An enhanced sense of idealism may proliferate among twenty-something's in contrast to more cautious positions of older citizens. Such polarized sentiments are epitomized in the lighthearted, but pointed saying, "if you're a young conservative, you have no heart, but if you're an old liberal, you have no brain." So, is it fair to assume those with less compassion for the environment lack heart? Although such generalistic ideals are impossible and irresponsible to suggest, much debate rests on such lofty perspectives that further the divide between an already polarized country. Further research into investigating motivations in ideology and social problems is merited, but we begin with some exploratory data between two groups of students in two sections of the US.

Geographic Location and Ideology

Previous studies conducted in New York, in the Social Psychology Laboratory at the New School for Social Research for instance, and in a methodology class at New School University, suggest that the vast majority of New Yorkers, especially among New School students, are among the most liberal in the United States (personal communication E. Castano, December 21, 2004; Turn Left, 2007). Extending our data collection beyond New York City allowed for geographic comparisons as well as increased variability in the ideological identification.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The study was conducted on-line through SurveyMonkey.com. Students enrolled in the Eugene Lang New School University and Louisiana State University voluntarily participated in completing an on-line survey, yielding a sample of 194. The electronic process aided in collecting data from multiple sources and geographic regions while

maintaining confidentiality. In accordance with our notion that the Southern population of the US is more politically conservative than the North, we analyzed whether Northern students self-identified as more liberal than their Southern counterparts. Dr. Priscilla Allen, an assistant professor of Social Work at Louisiana State University, agreed to assist in gathering data. She sent an e-mail request to students in several sections of the foundation and advanced curriculum at LSU's M.S.W. program. In New York, to acquire the hypothesized liberal data, the same request was sent to all senior undergraduates at Eugene Lang College, as well as students enrolled in the graduate program at New School University. The e-mail requested that the survey's link be forwarded to family members, friends, and coworkers.

A total of 207 people completed the on-line survey. However, thirteen were not completed in their entirety. Therefore, 192 questionnaires were included in the final analysis. Because some participants forwarded the link with the request to have friends and family members complete the survey, the number of recipients is not known, and the response rate of this unique method of collection cannot be determined, yet vital data related to location is unearthed.

Of the 192 participants, 103 were from Louisiana and other Southern States, 74 were from New York and the Northeast, and 17 were from other states of the Union (e.g., California and Washington). For most analyses, all 192 participants are included, but for South vs. North comparisons, we only included the two groups of Southern states and Northeastern states. Although the groups were not evenly divided, they were statistically appropriate to provide a beginning point to analyze differences and test hypotheses.

Material and Procedures

The survey comprised the NEP/DSP (LaTrobe, 2000) with 60 questions in four domains: 1/Attitudes toward the natural environment, 2/Attitudes towards religion, 3/Proneness to shame vs. guilt, and 4/Political Ideology. Political Ideology requested self reported measures Questions using a likert-type scale, such as “politically, I consider myself to be” with a response of one being more liberal and seven more conservative. General demographics were collected in three general participant data questions, (age, sex and state of residence). Participants filled out the questionnaire online by clicking on the link in the body of the e-mailed request to participate. The link brought the participant to the start page, which included consent information and directions on how to complete the survey. By clicking “next”, they had agreed to take the survey, however, if they opted not to finish it, it was explained that none of their results would be used.

The first section consisted of the 25 selected items from the NEP/DSP (table 1). People answered each item by indicating their level of agreement on a five-point scale (1= strongly disagree, 2= mostly disagree, 3= neutral, 4= mostly disagree, 5 = strongly agree.) All items required a response. Items are reported in the Appendix (participants saw a randomized version of these items that were not divided into the factors.)

Three questions were used to compile political ideological self-reports. These questions measured political ideology. The first measured conservatism in general and asked participants to what degree they considered themselves generally liberal or conservative. They were asked to report their general self-identification on a seven-point likert scale with one representing most liberal and seven representing most conservative: (1= liberal, 2= generally liberal, 3= somewhat liberal, 4= neutral, 5= somewhat conservative, 6= generally conservative and 7= conservative.) The second political ideology question measured social

conservatism on the same seven-point scale. Before the social ideology self-response, there was a brief description of social ideology:

There are (at least) two types of conservative and liberal beliefs: social and fiscal. Social conservatives in the US generally disagree (for example) with same sex marriage while social liberals tend to think it should be legalized. A goal of social conservatism is to protect meaningful tradition. A goal of social liberalism is to “modernize” culture and society... I consider myself:

The third political ideology self-response item measured fiscal conservatism, here there was a description also:

Fiscal conservatives are concerned with debt that leads to “undue” taxation. Fiscal liberals are more apt to support debt and taxation if they think it’s needed. I consider myself:

Lastly, three demographic questions were asked. The participant was required to type in his or her age, sex, and state in which they reside. While the results of gender differences in political ideology is in keeping with our expectations, we must admit to one problem that we see with the analysis of these data. The survey asked the participant to record their “sex,” not their “gender.” Unless we are discussing evolutionary differences (and even then) gender should have been the terminology used, not sex. Two participants obviously found fault in the question as they answered according to gender identification. One participant replied “queer” and the other “transgender.”

RESULTS

The number of women participants (133) is more than twice the number of men. The distribution of age in our subject pool shows a large range, from nineteen to eighty-two ($M=31.21$; $SD=14.21$), with a concentration in the younger generation. The three ideology questions revealed a close to normal distribution, more so for fiscal conservatism ($M = 3.75$; $SD = 1.74$) than social ($M = 3.3.13$; $SD = 1.79$) or general conservatism ($M = 3.26$; $SD = 1.79$).

We computed Cronbach’s alpha for each of the subscales of the NEP/DSP scales. Alphas are reported in Table 1. When we found these data to be satisfactory, composite scores were computed for each of the subscales. Table 1 also reports means and standard deviations for each of the three subscales. The “other” sub-scale, which is comprised of items that were not included in any of the four factors of the NEP/DSP, is not included in this analysis because of negligible results.

Note: The scales measure both liberalism and conservatism, but since conservative = 7 on the scale, and conservatism is the focus of this research, we will refer to the political ideology scales as measuring the degree of conservatism.

**Table 1:
 Cronbach Alpha, Mean, and Standard Deviation of each subscale of the NEP/DSP**

| NEP/DSP Subscales | Alpha | Mean | SD |
|--------------------------------|-------|------|------|
| Human interference with nature | 0.75 | 3.8 | 0.58 |
| Equity and development issues | 0.51 | 4.16 | 0.54 |
| Humans and economy over nature | 0.77 | 3.91 | 0.73 |

Measuring ideology

First, we looked at the inter-correlations between the ideology questions. A very strong correlation ($r = .81, p < .001$) was found between self-identified general conservatism and self-identified social conservatism. A strong correlation was also found between general conservatism and fiscal conservatism ($r = .66, p < .0001$). Fiscal conservatism and social conservatism were also strongly correlated ($r = .57, p < .0001$). This suggests that the general conservatism scale primarily taps social conservatism.

Ideology and Age

Additionally, we looked at the correlation between age and ideology. Age had a significant positive correlation to general conservatism ($r = .232, p < .001$), and also a

significant correlation, yet somewhat less so, to social conservatism ($r = .178$, $p < .013$). However, there was no correlation between age and fiscal conservatism.

Ideology and Gender

To test our hypothesis that political ideology was impacted by the gender of the participant, an ANOVA was computed. The responses to each of the three self-reported political ideology scales (general political ideology, social conservatism, and fiscal conservatism) were the dependant variables. We found marginal significance for “general conservatism” $F(1, 190) = 2.97$, $p < .09$. These results show that males ($M = 3.59$) are more “generally” conservative than females ($M = 3.11$). The test of social conservatism differences between male ($M = 3.46$) and female subjects ($M = 2.99$) is only marginally significant, $F(1, 190) = 2.80$, $p < .10$ while males ($M = 4.22$) and females ($M = 3.55$) differ significantly with respect to fiscal conservatism $F(1, 190) = 6.20$, $p < .01$.

Ideology and Geography

To test the hypothesis that more conservatives would be found in the South than the North, we also computed an analysis of variance using region as the independent variable (Northeast vs. South). This proved significant for general conservatism, $F(1, 174) = 3.96$, $p < .04$. As anticipated, Southerners were more conservative ($M = 3.45$) than Northerners ($M = 2.90$). The same pattern was observed for social conservatism. $F(1, 174) = 7.58$, $p < .01$ (Southerners = 3.42 and Northerners = 2.66). On the fiscal conservatism variable, however, there was no significant difference between Northeasterners and Southerners.

Ideology and Environmental Attitudes

The correlation between these three self-report items of political ideology and the NEP/DSP subscales was considered. The correlations are reported in Table 2. These

correlations suggest that *human interference with nature* is the most correlated with general and fiscal conservatism. However, ideology is also correlated with the factors: *equity and development issues, humans and economy over nature and duties to nonhumans*. Also, social conservatism is in general less correlated to these subscales than the other two types of conservatism. When one type of conservatism is partialled out before computing the correlation between the other kind of conservatism and the NEP/DSP subscales, it becomes even more evident that the correlation between ideology and such scales is due exclusively to fiscal conservatism.

Table 2:
 Table 2.

Correlations Between the NEP/DSP Subscales and the Three Political Ideology Self-Report Items

Correlations Between the NEP/DSP Scales and the Two Political Ideology Self-Report Items with the General Conservative Item Partialled Out

| | General Conservatism | Social Conservatism | Fiscal Conservatism | Social Conservatism | Fiscal Conservatism |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Human interference with nature | -0.43 | -0.3 | -0.42 | -0.07 | -0.32** |
| Equity and development issues | -0.28 | -0.22 | -0.29 | -0.07 | -0.2** |
| Humans and economy over nature | -0.32 | -0.19 | -0.27 | -0.04 | -0.2** |
| Duties to nonhumans | -0.28 | -0.20 | -0.29 | -0.05 | -0.21** |

**p<.005

These correlations imply a connection between the philosophies behind fiscal conservatism and the tendency to think that human interference with nature is positive, that the economy is higher on the list of priorities than environmental concerns, and that humans do not have altruistic responsibilities to non-humans.

As both regions, age and gender were related to ideology, we further wanted to assess whether the effects of ideology on environmental attitudes could be partially or fully explained by either of these two other variables. To this end, as Fiscal Conservatism was the variable that most strongly predicted environmental attitudes, we first regressed fiscal conservatism on social conservatism and saved the residuals in the variable that we call pure fiscal conservatism. We then regressed the environmental variables on gender (recoded -1/1) and state (also recoded 1/-1). Results are reported in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlations Between NEP/DSP and Gender, Region, and Fiscal Conservatism

| Dependent Variable | Gender | Region | Fiscal Conservatism |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------|---------------------|
| Human Interference with Nature | -0.19* | -0.11 | -0.3* |
| Equity and Development Issues | -0.15* | -0.06 | -0.19* |
| Human and Economy over Nature | -0.24* | -0.08 | -0.17* |
| Duties to Nonhumans | -0.09 | 0 | -0.21 |

Note. Gender, Male =1; Female = -1; Region, South =1; Northeast =-1.

*p < .05

Overall, what emerges from this analysis is that the effect of fiscal conservatism is largely independent of gender or region, as this variable significantly predicts the four subscales of the NEP/DSP even when gender and region are controlled for. Of interest is also the effect of gender that cannot be accounted for by ideology. Men scored lower (negative betas) on three of the four subscales of the NEP/DSP.

DISCUSSION

The pure measure of fiscal conservatism was found to have a strong negative correlation to the NEP and reversed items of the DSP, which signifies a lack of concern with environmental issues and acceptance of the dominance of human kind over nature. Fiscal conservatism was most significantly correlated to the first factor of the NEP/DSP entitled *human interference with nature*. This first factor measures how uncomfortable the participant is with the idea that humans have caused environmental problems. The fact that fiscal conservatives were so negatively correlated with these items indicates that they “disagreed” with statements such as “present levels of industrial activity are severely upsetting to the natural environment” and “a change in basic attitudes is necessary in order to solve environmental problems.”

The connection found between conservatism and environmental attitudes relies on self-reported identification with vague political philosophies. There are problems and benefits with this mode of collecting data. Self-identification of general political ideology is not the purest way to determine what the participant actually believes politically. However, it is a good way to ask how a participant thinks of himself or herself. Then, further asking the question of self-identification on the social and fiscal political fronts, potentially shows what the respondents meant by their identification in the first place, if they meant anything at all (other than their parents are conservative, or they like the word, etc.).

There are many problems with the approach to research on topics surrounding the liberal/conservative dichotomy. Social research papers on the clarification of political ideologies are often controversial and mistrusted because it is clear that the author is coming from one side or the other (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003). While this study was attempted from a non-biased standpoint, it will probably be no exception. The strong polarity of the issues tends to draw one's alliance to one pole or the other.

Along these lines, by reading the confidential comments sent to the experimenter, it is apparent that in attempting to define a political ideology, one is bound to encounter the problem that there is no sufficient single definition. Also, to ask certain Americans to conform by labeling themselves with societal terms is a task that may be seen as verging on infringement of basic Constitutional rights.

Below are all comments that referenced the political section of the questionnaire:

"I'm a Californian going to school in the south and I've found it hard to find others who share my liberal views on all aspects of life. As a result, I've learned to be more open to other people's political opinions and ideas, regardless of their party affiliation (though I still have my same views that I came to the south with)."

"Because I currently do not know much about politics, the explanations of the political terms were also very helpful."

"I am a practicing Christian at a local church in Baton Rouge. I base my life's decisions, political beliefs, and philosophies upon my religious beliefs."

"I consider myself a social radical."

"I am from the south, and I have been brought up as a Republican. With this being an influence by family, my political beliefs are slightly bias."

"Did not agree with some of the definitions in the politics' section of the survey."

"Even though I know I should, I am not registered to vote. I am not interested in politics at all."

"I am a strong believer in scientific advances, but I don't think that they will ever be able to solve all problems with the environment. I think that while some of the actions of humans do harm to nature, we also do much to restore damage caused by man and nature itself. I believe in the right to hunt and fish. I go to church regularly, but my religion doesn't dictate my everyday life. I consider myself to be a good employee and have not had any indication from any superiors that would indicate otherwise. While I am fairly conservative, I am acquainted with some homosexuals and do not object to the idea of them being legally bound by marriage to someone they love."

"I say I am a very conservative person, although a lot of times I do not even understand the topic that is being politically debated. I don't have a lot of interest in politics, and I base my "conservative" status on a few issues that I know about and believe in strongly."

"I have voted as both a Democrat and a Republican."

"I am very conservative when it comes to following rules and I like to do the accepted act. I do not like to diverge from what is expected of me in my school, family, or social life."

"I was raised with conservative parents and turned out that way. I am glad Bush won!"

"My political views do not precisely fall along the current normative axis, as I espouse a return to monarchy in conjunction with social mobility through civil-service examinations ala Tang Dynasty China."

"I am not a liberal or a conservative; I am an anarchist--so I checked neutral, although I would be more appropriately categorized as far left, or radical left. I found a lot of flaws in your survey because most of the time I felt I didn't really fit in the options."

"These questions leave no space for complicated issues that may not be able to be answered by filling in the blank. Also the questions about fiscal and social liberals and conservatives are ACTUALLY asking "do you want to modernize culture?" and are you apt to support debt...?"

"I have worked in state government for 30 years. I just completed a master's degree in public administration from LSU. Americans need a liberal democrat with a brain in the White House. Maybe the other Clinton will run?? I would vote for Bill, again, if it were possible."

"Those are limited and obfuscating definitions of conservative and liberal- and the spectrum of political thought is not adequately represented, I don't appreciate having to check a liberal box because it is the 'best' option- radicalism is not liberalism, in fact they are oppositional."

"your definitions of "fiscal conservative/fiscal liberal" are somewhat inaccurate and confusing"

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The study of political ideology and the implications toward behavior is still in its infancy, however the connection established in this study between environmental attitudes and political ideology, specifically fiscal conservatism, serves as a starting point to uncover further discovery in the science of political ideology. Although the area of political ideology can be considered more art than science with methodology requiring more rigor in establishing useful tools. Some, including Conover, Searing & Crewe (2002) espouse that researchers and educators have a responsibility to challenge the apathy related to participation in the political community that erodes the pluralism of our democracy. In a time where polarization is commonly divided among liberals and conservatives from everything from urban development, to education, to the response of the government to disaster, and the list goes on and on, research in this area holds an important place in understanding current

and future decisions of our policy makers, and the perspectives of our citizens in shaping those decisions.

A potential weakness of the study lies in the measurement itself, although this is not unusual when measuring attitudes in general. Although quite possibly the most accurate measure of political ideological constructs, the NEP/DSP was created from two separate scales. In the future, we would like to perform ecologically valid, yet rigorous research involving environmental attitudes of fiscal liberals and conservatives. The potential to construct valid and reliable measures in the field of political science and ideology is limitless, but will also have intrinsic challenges. It is necessary to continue work on defining liberalism and conservatism and the categories of social and fiscal political ideology. Further, the study has potential to inform students about the realities of political ideology, even if they note disinterest in political science and policy. The irony is that students often note disinterest, but have strong opinions when asked to self-report. Opening the dialogue may quite possibly influence the responsibility that citizens have on our communities and their environment in which we rely.

CONCLUSION

Exploring the connectivity between political ideology and environmental attitudes has brought us closer to understanding the connectivity of ideology and attitudes in general. Of the findings this research generated, the most salient is the finding that a pure measure of self-reported fiscal conservatism has an undeniably strong negative correlation with the factor *human interference with nature*. Fiscal conservatism as an ideology, or way to see the world, is reflected in the attitude that industrial activity is not upsetting the natural environment, and does not need to be reduced. How much power or concern should humans have over nonhumans, for example? How does denial related to the environment on which

we rely perpetuate further problems of global unrest? The world view purporting humans have the right to modify nature, and that no change in attitude is necessary to solve environmental problems teeters in an area potentially harmful to the survival of all.

Overall, the explorative nature of this research generated data that can be used to create better informed, focused studies related to the largely subjective and socially constructed science of political ideology. This work serves as a starting point to further explore the topic of political ideology and its effects on attitudes, and perhaps most important, responsibility of those attitudes.

REFERENCES

- Albrecht, D., Bultena, G., Hoiberg., E., Nowak, P. (1982) The new environmental paradigm scale. *Journal of Environmental Education*, 13, 39-43.
- Conover, P. J., & Feldman, S. (1981) The origins and meaning of liberal/conservative self-identifications. *American Journal of Political Science*, 25(4), 617-646.
- Conover, P. J., & Searing, D. D. (2005). Part III: Deliberation among citizens – studying ‘everyday political talk’ in the deliberative system. *ACTA Politica*, 40(3), 269-283.
- Conover, P. J., Searing, D. D., & Crewe. I. M. (2002). The deliberative potential of political discussion. *British Journal of Political Science*, 32(1), 21-62.
- Cutler, N. E. (1970) Generation, maturation, and party affiliation: A cohort analysis. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 33, 583.
- Dunlap, R. E., & Van Liere, K. D. (1978). The new environmental paradigm: A proposed measuring instrument. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 9, 10-19.
- Eagley, A., Diekman, A., Johannensen-Schmidt, M., Koenig, A. (2004). Gender gaps in sociopolitical attitudes: A Social Psychological Analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87(6), 796-816.
- Ewert, A. & Baker, D. (2001). Standing for where you sit: An exploratory analysis of the relationship between academic major and environment beliefs. *Environment and Behavior*, 33(5), 687-707.
- Germain, C. B. & Gitterman, A. (1987). Ecological perspective. *Encyclopedia of social work*. 18th ed. Silver Springs, MD: NASW Press.
- Gilbert, N. & Terrell, P. (2005). *Dimensions of social welfare policy*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Jost, J. T. (2003). Political conservatism as motivated social cognition. *Psychological Bulletin*: Vol. 129(3), 339-375.

- Jost, J. T., Glaser, J., Kruglanski, A. W., & Sulloway, F. J. (2003). Exceptions that prove the rule—Using a theory of motivated social cognition to account for ideological incongruities and political abnormalities: Reply to Greenberg and Jonas. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(3), 383-394.
- La Trobe, H.L. & Acott, T.G. (2000) A modified NEP/DSP environmental attitudes scale. *Journal of Environmental Education*, 32(1), 12-21.
- Moyers, B. (2005). Welcome to Doomsday. *The New York Review of Books*. New York. 52(5), 8.
- Pollak, O. (1943). Conservatism in later Maturity and Old Age. *American Sociological Review*, 8(2), 175-179.
- Powell, M. (1997). No comfort for the left. *Social Policy*, 97(27), Retrieved from Ebscohost.
- Pratto, F., Sidanius, J., Stallworth, L. M., Malle, B. F. (1994) Social dominance orientation: A personality variable predicting social and political attitudes. *Journal of Personality And Social Psychology*, 67(4), 741-763.
- Sapiro, V. & Conover, P. J. (2001). Gender equality in the public mind. *Women and Politics*, 22(1), 1-36.
- Schneider, G.L. ed. (2003) Conservatism in America since 1930: A Reader. New York: NYU Press.
- Searing, D. D., Conover, P. J. & Crewe, I. (2003). Citizenship in the age of liberalism. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 56(4), 634-651.
- Shaw, J. S. (2003) Private property rights, not ideologies, are the crux. *Independent Review*, 7(1), 109-204.
- Turn Left. (2007). Liberal culture. Retrieved on August 28, 2007 from <http://www.turnleft.com/pnp.html>

****Author Information:** Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to:
Priscilla D. Allen
Associate Professor/ Louisiana State University School of Social Work
Associate Director/ LSU Life Course and Aging Center
311 Huey P. Long Fieldhouse
Baton Rouge, LA 70803-5501
Phone: 225-578-1325
e-mail: pallen2@lsu.edu
