

When Left Is Right and Right Is Left: The Psychological Correlates of Political Ideology in China

Peter Beattie 

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Rong Chen

Colgate University

Karim Bettache

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

A robust empirical literature suggests that the development of one's political ideology is the product of an "elective affinity" between the discursive, socially constructed elements of ideological belief systems and the psychological constraints, motives, and interests of those who are drawn to those belief systems. However, most studies which support this elective affinity theory have been conducted in the West. In the present study, we tested the theory in China to see whether elective affinities between psychological traits and political ideology are more likely to be universal. Across a nationally representative sample (N = 509), we found initial support for the characterization of the left-right divide in China, albeit in reverse. Namely, the "liberal Right in China mostly evinces traits of the psychological Left in the West (e.g., lower intolerance of ambiguity), while the "conservative Left" mostly evinces traits of the psychological right in the West (e.g., higher system justification). Epistemic motives were most reliably related to political ideology, while existential and relational motives were more mixed; economic and political aspects of ideology were more closely linked to psychological traits than social/cultural aspects. The present findings provide an extension of existing theory and opportunities for further development.

KEY WORDS: China, cross-cultural, elective affinities, ideology, psychological traits

"For a social science theory to be correct, it must also be valid for the Chinese."

—Max Weber (1949, p. 58)

"Wherever there are masses of people—everywhere except deserts—they are invariably divided into the Left, the middle and the Right..."

—Mao Zedong (1957)

From hundreds of studies carried out overwhelmingly in Western countries, we know that political-economic ideology correlates with a range of psychological traits. Ideology thus seems

to be not merely the result of cold cognition aimed at arriving at an accurate understanding of the political world, but also, at least partially, the product of various psychological needs or motives. But what about non-Western contexts, where the ideological elements “on offer” during the process of socialization, education, and media use are radically different? Are all ideologies across the world the result of motivated social cognition, and are there “elective affinities” between psychological traits and all broad means of understanding and organizing the political world, even outside of the West? Would a country like China, with an ideological spectrum quite different from that of liberal capitalist democracies, also evince links between psychological traits and ideology? If so, how would the psychological traits studied in Western contexts attach to the predominant ideological cleavages in China? Answering such questions has been a difficult research task, given the lack of research in China on elective affinities or ideology as motivated social cognition and barriers to data collection. This study seeks to uncover the linkages between psychological traits and political beliefs in China using a nationally representative sample and to provide an initial test of the universality of a political-psychological theory widely researched in the West.

Just as some chemical compounds mix and some repel each other, we display “elective affinities” toward some ideas and aversions to others. In this view, the development of one’s political ideology “is the product of an ‘elective affinity’ between the discursive, socially constructed elements of ideological belief systems and the psychological constraints, motives, and interests of those who are drawn to those belief systems” (Jost, Nam, Amodio, & Van Bavel, 2014, p. 29). One’s history of exposure to such discursive elements—one’s intellectual biography—plays a commanding role, determining to which ideas one’s psychological traits may provide an inclination or affinity. Also, different social environments offer different discursive elements from which one’s ideology or political worldview can be built. Hence China, with a radically different set of discursive elements from which to build an ideology, offers an ideal context in which to explore the reach and application of this theory.

Despite its Western origin, the left-right ideological divide organized around equality and change versus hierarchy and tradition is a fair approximation of ideological spectra around the world, including among capitalist democracies in East Asia (Caprara et al., 2017; Caprara & Vecchione, 2018; Jou, 2010; Noël & Thérien, 2008; cf. Ashton et al., 2005). Conceived according to this ideal type of the left-right divide, “left psychology” would then comprise epistemic, existential, and relational traits inclining one toward embracing social change and desiring greater equality, and “right psychology” would comprise traits inclining one toward fearing change and desiring stasis, stability, and hierarchical order (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003). As Jost (2017a) explains (using “liberal” in the U.S. political sense),

the style and substance of conservative ideology—which includes the maintenance of what is traditional and familiar and the justification of hierarchical, unequal forms of social organization—promise certainty, simplicity, order, security, and orthodoxy in a way that liberal ideology seldom does. To embrace the vicissitudes of liberal ideology—which emphasizes equality, progress, diversity, and tolerance of differences—one must be willing to accept, psychologically speaking, some degree of uncertainty, complexity, novelty, and ambiguity. (p. 169)

If ideological asymmetries in left and right psychology were found throughout the world, it would provide some support for the view of elective affinities as a context-dependent evolutionary adaptation (or exaptation). In this view, such ideological asymmetries in psychological traits form an “evolutionarily stable strategy” directing social evolution along a middle ground between stasis (detrimental in changing environments) and rapid change (during which useful adaptations may be lost) (Beattie, 2019; Hibbing, Smith, & Alford, 2014; Petersen & Aarøe, 2014).

However, there is suggestive evidence from global survey data that the content of left and right *psychology* may be better characterized as contrasting sets of traits inclining toward desires for protection versus freedom (Malka, Lelkes, & Soto, 2017). These contrasting traits inclining toward different desires have effects that vary according to information ecology: For instance, in countries where ideological “bundles” combine social-welfare policies with conservative sexual mores (or where levels of political knowledge, ideological constraint, and economic development are relatively low), those inclined toward desiring protection over freedom would tend to prefer left-wing economic, and right-wing social, policies (Malka, Soto, Inzlicht, & Lelkes, 2014). Further research is needed on how to best characterize the affinities or inclinations comprising left and right psychology, whether desires for freedom versus protection, or change and equality versus tradition and hierarchy.

Evidentiary support for elective affinities, and the more specific theory of political conservatism as motivated social cognition, is considerable. Perhaps the strongest evidence comes from the fact that while decades of public opinion research in the United States have revealed persistent ignorance about politics and a widespread inability to define liberalism and conservatism (e.g., Kinder & Kalmoe, 2017), nonetheless people in the United States clearly evince a latent form of ideology linked to their psychological characteristics (Azevedo, Jost, Rothmund, & Sterling, 2019). Meta-analyses of hundreds of studies on the relationships between ideology and a dozen psychological variables have revealed robust relationships, even after testing for publication bias (Jost, Sterling, & Stern, 2018; Jost, Stern, Rule, & Sterling, 2017). However, while such studies have been carried out in over a dozen countries, these countries have all been Western (minus Israel, South Africa, and Turkey).

If this political-psychological theory is accurate, cross-culturally shared psychological traits should evince elective affinities with the different ideas in varying information ecologies, each with their own ideological menus (which political ideas “go with” each other; for instance, in the United States, opposition to abortion and favoring small government go together). Significant differences in the distribution of these psychological traits across cultures—which might affect which ideological components are found most attractive—are not expected. To determine the extent to which psychological traits are shared cross-culturally, Stankov (2017) administered a large number of psychological scales to participants from over 30 countries. The results revealed that cross-cultural differences on measures of personality, morality, and values are comparatively small; individual differences were found to be more pronounced than cross-cultural differences.

The psychological influences affecting the selection of ideas within one’s information ecology (the set of information—ideas, facts, beliefs, narratives—available within a region) have been divided into *epistemic*, *existential*, and *relational* motives—that is, psychological traits that affect one’s attitudes toward understanding the world, responses to threats affecting life’s meaning, and relations to others, respectively. Among epistemic traits, dogmatism, personal need for structure, need for cognitive closure, intolerance of ambiguity, “bullshit receptivity,” and conscientiousness have been found to correlate with right-wing ideology, while openness, cognitive reflection, and need for cognition have been found to correlate with left-wing ideology; among existential traits, fear of death, threat and disgust sensitivity, authoritarianism, and system justification tendency have been associated with right-wing ideology; and among relational traits, attachment anxiety and avoidance, social dominance orientation, and a preference for cohesiveness have been found to correlate with right-wing ideology (Bettache & Chiu, 2019; Fatke, 2017; Jost, 2017a; Jost, van der Linden, Panagopoulos, & Hardin, 2018; Jost et al., 2017; Sterling, Jost, & Pennycook, 2016; Weber & Federico, 2007). Ideological asymmetries extend into moral psychology, with the moral foundations or senses of respect for authority, loyalty, and sanctity more acute on the right, and care and fairness more acute on the left (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009). Ideological asymmetries have even been found in consumer behavior, like trying new brands or preferences for domestic versus foreign products (Jost, 2017b). Studies of selective exposure to political discourse, or cognitive dissonance avoidance, have

had mixed results, with some indicating a symmetrical pattern between left and right, and others suggesting these behaviors are more common on the right (Jost, 2017a).

Asymmetries in psychological traits should be expected within different populations, but those between liberals and conservatives in the United States might not be expected in populations with vastly different ideological belief systems—particularly if ideological belief systems influence the development of correlated psychological traits, rather than the other way around (Beattie, 2017; Jost et al., 2014). Opposing groups in political-economic and ideological environments other than those of the West might evince asymmetries in different psychological traits; or, none at all. Yet there is some reason to expect that the same psychological traits may influence the development of ideology in vastly different contexts. After all, few of the measurements for traits asymmetrically distributed between U.S. conservatives and liberals, or European rightists and leftists—e.g., needs for cognition, structure, closure—were originally designed with any expectation of ideological asymmetries, which were only discovered later (Jost, 2017a, p. 169). If the same psychological traits influence the development of ideology in vastly different political-economic contexts, as the theory would suggest, they should attach to different ideas in different information ecologies. There is some evidence for this in social democracies and postcommunist societies (Langer, Vasilopoulos, McAvay, & Jost, 2020; McFarland, Ageyev, & Djintcharadze, 1996; Oskarsson et al., 2015; Soboleva, 2020; Thorisdottir, Jost, Liviatan, & Shrout, 2007).

In these political-economic contexts, an uncertainty-reducing desire for stasis or resistance to change may incline people to support socialism over capitalism (Jost, Krochik, Gaucher, & Hennes, 2009)—just as, theoretically, a desire for equality may incline people to support a one-party political hierarchy to enforce economic equality. Another issue arising outside of North America and Western Europe is that “what is the “old” to be conserved and what is the “new” to be embraced vary across political contexts” (Soboleva, 2020, p. 72). In China, for instance, the “old” could be the past 40 years of reform and opening, the Mao era, the republican era, or the imperial/feudal/Confucian era, and the “new” is similarly overpopulated terrain.

Research on elective affinities in countries other than Western capitalist democracies has been relatively rare, limiting the scope and further development of this theory. On the one hand, cross-cultural psychologists have shown little interest in political science; on the other hand, political psychologists who study ideology seldom explore beyond the Western context (cf. Kim, Kang, & Yun, 2012; Roets, Au, & Van Hiel, 2015; Talhelm et al., 2015; Zhang & Zhong, 2019).

Beyond Euro-American Ideology

China offers an ideal location to test for elective affinities between psychological traits and political ideology outside of the West, due to its vastly different ideological spectrum and information ecology (Jenco, 2013). Having experienced a socialist revolution nearly a century ago, it offers a test of Hannah Arendt’s speculation that “[t]he most radical revolutionary will become a conservative the day after the revolution” (Seldes, 1985, p. 96). Certainly, the original revolutionaries would initially seek to preserve their new system, and subsequent generations may be attracted to preserving the (revolutionary) status quo out of similar psychological motives to those that incline Westerners to conservatism.

Officially, China is a socialist country (albeit, again officially, in the primary stage of building socialism), although starting in the late 1970s, it began taking the “capitalist road” to development (Bramall, 2008; Xi, 2017). At the elite level, even within the Communist Party, ideological tensions are evident (Lynch, 2015; Tang, 2017). Contrary to what some might expect in a one-party state, ideological differences are evident among segments of the mass public as well. These differences were revealed by the results of an online political survey, the Chinese Political Compass (CPC), designed by netizens at Peking University to measure opinions on political, economic, and social/

cultural issues. This measurement was designed by “Chinese intellectuals [who] have defined the core ideological divides in China as those between conservatives on the *left* who support a socialist (authoritarian) state, who emphasize national unity and security, who think highly of the old communist/socialist economic system, and who value traditional culture, versus liberals on the *right* who advocate for a constitutional democracy, who embrace individual liberty, who support market-oriented reform, and who are enthusiastic about modern science and technology” (Pan & Xu, 2015, p. 2, emphasis added). Hence Pan and Xu define the ideological spectrum in China as ranging from the “conservative left” to the “liberal right.” (This classification prioritizes the *economic* divide between left and right [see also Wu, 2019], which is more similar worldwide than divides on political philosophy and social/cultural issues; the economic divide focuses on equality versus inequality, the content-laden side of the equality/change versus hierarchy/stasis dichotomy, while change versus stasis is non-directional or content-free; Jost et al., 2009). On economic issues, the Chinese left is more similar to U.S. liberals, although with a much greater acceptance of government economic intervention (closer to socialists in the United States); the Chinese right is similar to center-right liberals and conservatives in their embrace of capitalism. On political issues, the Chinese left shares little with U.S. liberals; they share some views in common with U.S. conservatives on national unity, patriotism, national security, and state sovereignty. The Chinese right, on the other hand, shares much in common with U.S. liberals and conservatives alike, mostly on issues like electoral competition and constitutional democracy taken for granted and left uncontested in the West. On social/cultural issues, the Chinese left shares something in common with U.S. conservatives (although with vastly different cultural values to protect, and opposite positions on social issues like abortion and religion), and the Chinese right looks similar to U.S. liberals in their commitment to individual freedom (see also Lu, Chu, & Shen, 2016). This makes China an ideal place to test for elective affinities, particularly whether they primarily “attach” to social/cultural or economic aspects of ideology.

In Mao’s conception, “left” and “right” meant much the same as in the change/equality versus tradition/hierarchy conceptualization; only the goal of equality (communism) was unquestioned, so left and right referred to quicker or slower paths, respectively, toward the ultimate goal (Nathan & Shi, 1996, pp. 526–527). After reform and opening, while communism remained the official goal, the means of attaining it changed from state-directed development to market-directed development managed by the state. This split the combination of equality with change and tradition with hierarchy: Change in the direction of capitalist markets meant greater inequality (empirically, if not theoretically), while tradition meant hewing to Mao-era policies promoting economic equality. Whether post-Mao China has broken with Marx’s ideas has inspired vigorous debate. On one reading of Marx, since pre-revolution China was still in a feudal stage of development, the country required a capitalist stage to develop the forces of production to a cutting-edge level before transitioning to socialism and then communism (Bramall, 2008, pp. 84–87). This interpretation is closest to the official line (Jiang, 2018; Xi, 2020). Others contend that reform and opening represented a rejection of Marxism and socialism (Hart-Landsberg & Burkett, 2005), and contemporary China’s poor record on redistribution means that it is not fully socialist (Naughton, 2017).

Conservative left and liberal right form a broad categorization, intended to capture the most common, widespread forms of ideology. But it does not describe the full breadth of ideological diversity in China—like the New Left or neo-Confucianism (Blanchette, 2019; Fogel, Cheek, & Ownby, 2019)—just as the liberal-conservative categorization in the United States excludes ideologies like democratic socialism or paleoconservatism. For instance, one study of online political discourse in China identified 11 ideological clusters, only some of which would fit seamlessly under a “liberal right”-“conservative left” organization (Shi-Kupfer, Ohlberg, Lang, & Lang, 2017). Even within this broad dichotomy, surprises (for many Westerners) abound. Communist Party members tend to take more progressive stances on social issues and have less authoritarian views than the general public (Ji & Jiang, 2020). Many liberal intellectuals in China (“liberal” in the *economic* sense of favoring

unimpeded free-market capitalism, and in the *political* sense of favoring competitive democracy—the same usage as in “liberal right”) support Donald Trump and adopt U.S. conservative positions on political correctness, Islam, feminism, and other issues (Lin, 2021). However, these are ideological trends evident only among the most politically knowledgeable; among the mass public, even the left-right dichotomy is poorly understood, despite having been used by political elites since the founding of the PRC (Wu, 2020).

China therefore offers an ideal test of the universality of elective-affinity theory. Its ideological spectrum is fundamentally different from those of Western countries. Its “liberal right” roughly combines the socially liberal/left-wing and economically conservative/right-wing beliefs of Western contexts, and its “conservative left” roughly combines the socially conservative/right-wing and economically liberal/left-wing beliefs of Western contexts. Uncovering how psychological traits attach (or not) to ideology in the Chinese context may reveal more about which aspects of ideology have an elective affinity with psychological traits. Are economic aspects of ideology naturally aligned with social aspects, as in the hierarchy/stasis versus equality/change conception of elective affinities? Or are the links between psychological traits and both economic and social ideology in Western countries, where almost all studies have focused, simply the result of the historically contingent ideological bundles prevalent there; and in countries with different ideological bundles, psychological traits more naturally incline people to either the freedom promised by right-wing economic and left-wing social ideology, or the protection promised by left-wing economic and right-wing social ideology? Or are these elective affinities even more historically contingent, with psychology-ideology links arrayed in as-yet unconceived manners across different countries? Still another possibility is that ideology in Western contexts is uniquely linked to psychological traits, and in other contexts psychology has no measurable relationship to ideology.

Given the dearth of research outside of the West, we were left with our own educated guess. Conservative left ideology would seem to evince an affinity to psychological traits similar to those correlated with right-wing ideology in the West: The ideology promises to maintain the traditional and familiar; to justify political, *if not economic*, hierarchy; and to promise order, certainty, security, and orthodoxy. (That is, protection over freedom.) Likewise, liberal-right ideology seems to provide psychological support similar to that provided by left-wing ideology in the West: challenging the traditional and familiar; undermining political, if not economic, hierarchy; and accepting complexity, uncertainty, and novelty. (Or freedom over protection.) Hence, we expected that in China, conservative-left ideology would correlate with traits of the psychological right, and liberal-right ideology would correlate with traits of the psychological left (according to how the psychological left and right have been defined in the West).

Overview of Present Research

We selected 19 psychological constructs and the scales used to measure them in which previous research in Western contexts had found ideological asymmetries. Some, like dogmatism, had relatively large effect sizes; others, like need for cognition, had relatively small effect sizes. Some, like the personal need for structure, had been tested repeatedly; others, like anxious/avoidant attachment, had been tested infrequently. Some, like need for cognitive closure, had exhibited an unambiguous relationship with political ideology; others, like selective exposure, had exhibited contradictory, mixed results. Some, like cognitive reflection and death anxiety, were clearly epistemic and existential motives, respectively; others, like moral foundations and Schwartz values, were difficult to classify. We included two novel questions to explore whether participants conceived of equality as primarily political or economic and whether a completely free market would lead to more or less equality. Where available, we used previously validated Chinese translations of scales, and where unavailable, we translated English scales into Chinese, then back-translated them into English to ensure accuracy.

In short, building off the limited results of elective-affinity research in social democracies and postcommunist societies, our overarching expectation was that in China, traits of the psychological left would correlate with “liberal right” opinions, and traits of the psychological right would correlate with “conservative left” opinions. That is, we expected that in China, the left is (psychologically) right, and the right is (psychologically) left.

Research Questions

Epistemic Motives

Meta-analyses of studies (mostly in Western capitalist democracies) on links between “Big Five” personality traits and political ideology have found the strongest correlations between openness to experience and left-wing ideology, and conscientiousness with right-wing ideology (Cichocka & Dhont, 2018). Fatke’s (2017) analysis of World Values Survey data replicated the same two relationships but also found that extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness were positively correlated with left-wing ideology. The study further found that relationships between personality traits and ideology varied by country and were affected by levels of human development and political freedom. In countries scoring lower on the Freedom House Index, agreeableness, neuroticism, and conscientiousness were more strongly correlated with policy preferences, but extraversion and openness were more strongly correlated with policy preferences in countries scoring higher on the index. Correlations between all five personality traits and policy preferences were stronger the higher a country’s score on the Human Development Index. Given the results of past cross-national studies, we expected conscientiousness to be higher in those further to the left in China, and openness, extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness to be higher in those further to the right (RQ1).

Past research has found that scores on the Cognitive Reflection Test (CRT) correlate positively with left-wing political opinions (Deppe et al., 2015). The CRT measures miserly information processing, or the tendency to use automatic, Type 1 processing over more cognitively taxing Type 2 processing. We expected cognitive reflection to be higher among those further to the right in China (RQ2).

Jost, van der Linden, et al. (2018) meta-analysis found dogmatism, a relatively unshakeable but unjustified certainty in one’s beliefs, to have the strongest correlation (among several other traits) with right-wing ideology in Western countries. We expected dogmatism to be higher among those further to the left in China (RQ3).

People vary in the complexity with which they structure information, with some preferring simple structures and being more likely to apply stereotypes to new situations (Neuberg & Newsom, 1993). Jost, van der Linden, et al. (2018) meta-analysis found a personal need for structure to correlate positively with right-wing ideology. We expected need for structure to be higher among those further to the left in China (RQ4).

Defining “bullshit” in Harry Frankfurt’s terms as an insidious form of speech unconnected with truth and irrelevant to describing reality, Sterling et al. (2016) analyzed relationships between ratings of pseudo-profound bullshit statements and political ideology, finding a correlation between right-wing economic beliefs and bullshit receptivity. We expected bullshit receptivity to be higher among those further to the left in China (RQ5).

Jost, van der Linden, et al. (2018) meta-analysis found need for cognition, a measure of engagement in and enjoyment from thinking, positively associated with left-wing ideology in Western countries. We expected need for cognition to be higher among those further to the right in China (RQ6).

Past research in Western countries has found intolerance of ambiguity, a measure of the extent to which ambiguous situations are perceived as threatening, to be associated with right-wing ideology

(Jost, van der Linden, et al., 2018). We expected intolerance of ambiguity to be higher among those further to the left in China (RQ7).

The desire to avoid confusion and ambiguity by seizing upon a definitive explanation, or closure, has been associated with right-wing ideology in Western countries (Jost, van der Linden, et al., 2018). We expected need for closure to be higher among those further to the left in China (RQ8).

Existential Motives

System justification theory proposes that people are motivated (to avoid negative affect and cognitive dissonance), to varying extents, to justify the existing social system, even when such rationalization conflicts with other affect-based motives to protect self-esteem and ingroup standing (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Jost et al., 2003, 2011). People higher in system-justification tendency tend to be on the right in Western countries, as elements of right-wing ideology provide more support for the status quo, reducing negative affect, than left-wing ideology. We expected the opposite pattern in China: Those further to the left would exhibit a higher system-justification tendency (RQ9).

One of the oldest areas of elective-affinity research focused on the relationship between right-wing ideology and authoritarianism (Jost et al., 2003). Some of this research has been criticized for using measures of authoritarianism contaminated by content-predictor overlap (Malka, Lelkes, & Holzer, 2017). We expected authoritarianism to be higher among those further to the left in China (RQ10).

Meta-analyses of the relationship between right-wing ideology and fear of death have found conflicting results, with Onraet, Van Hiel, Dhont, and Pattyn (2013) finding a significant relationship and Jost et al. (2017) a nonsignificant relationship. We expected fear of death to be higher among those further to the left in China (RQ11).

Terrizzi, Shook, and McDaniel's (2013) meta-analysis found disgust sensitivity to correlate with right-wing ideology (cf. Tybur, Merriman, Hooper, McDonald, & Navarrete, 2010). Jost, van der Linden, et al. (2018) meta-analysis found threat sensitivity to correlate with right-wing ideology (cf. Crawford, 2017). We expected greater disgust and threat sensitivity among those further to the left in China (RQ12).

Relational Motives

Social dominance orientation (SDO), a generalized preference for group hierarchies and inequality, correlates with right-wing ideology in Western countries, and has been found to mediate conservatives' relatively lower acuity in the moral senses of care and fairness (Kugler, Jost, & Noorbaloochi, 2014). We expected SDO to be higher among those further to the left in China (RQ13).

Regarding cohesiveness, previous research has found that U.S. conservatives evince a greater preference for "tight," cohesive, behaviorally uniform social groups (Bettache & Chiu, 2019). The effect of conservative (right-wing) beliefs in the United States was comparable to the effect of living in a collectivist culture among the study's Indian sample. We expected a greater preference for cohesive, behaviorally uniform groups among those further to the left in China (RQ14).

Early unsuccessful attempts at emotional attachment are hypothesized to result in insecure attachment styles: anxious attachment, a preoccupation with seeking protective proximity, and avoidant attachment, keeping emotional distance from others. Previous research has linked right-wing ideology with anxious (through SDO) and avoidant (through right-wing authoritarianism) attachment styles (Weber & Federico, 2007), though results have differed across studies (Koleva & Rip, 2009). We expected anxious and avoidant attachment to be higher among those further to the left in China (RQ15).

Past research has found self-reported socioeconomic standing to correlate with right-wing ideology (specifically, a measurement of neoliberal beliefs) in the United States and India, although not in Hong Kong (Beattie, Bettache, & Chong, 2019). We expected power-ladder rankings to be higher among those further to the left in China (RQ16).

Others

Moral foundations theory proposes that humans evolved distinct moral senses or foundations rooted in emotions and quick, effortless thought, which are activated when a moral question is presented. Past research has shown that the moral senses of care and fairness are more acute in those further to the (secular) left, while the senses of authority, loyalty, and purity are more acute in those further to the (religious) right (Bettache, Hamamura, Amrani Idrissi, Amenyogbo, & Chiu, 2019; Graham et al., 2013). We expected those further to the right in China to be higher in moral progressivism (RQ17).

Past research has had mixed results concerning the relationship between selective exposure to media and ideology, with some finding greater selective exposure on the right, and others finding no ideological asymmetry (Jost, 2017a). We therefore had a weak expectation of selective exposure being higher among those further to the left in China (RQ18).

The meaning of tradition versus change is relatively straightforward in the Chinese ideological context; however, equality versus hierarchy is fraught with multiple interpretations. Hierarchy could evoke the party/government, or the hierarchy of wealth; equality could evoke the political principle of “one person, one vote,” or wealth/income parity. In keeping with the conception of left/right psychology as consisting of traits inclining toward desires for equality versus hierarchy, we expected the right in China to have this feature of left psychology; given their political commitments, we expected them to be more likely to interpret equality as primarily political and to believe that further “reform and opening” leading to a perfectly free market would *reduce* wealth and income inequalities (RQ19).

The currently dominant psychological classification of values organizes them according to two axes—conservation (conformity, security, and tradition) versus openness to change (stimulation, self-direction, hedonism), and self-enhancement (power, achievement, hedonism) versus self-transcendence (universalism, benevolence). Personality traits affect one’s prioritization of values, which in turn affect the development of ideology, and vice versa (Jost, Basevich, Dickson, & Noorbaloochi, 2016). In Western European countries, the Schwartz values of universalism, stimulation, and benevolence tend to correlate with left-wing ideology, and the values of security, conformity, tradition, and power correlate with right-wing ideology (Purko, Schwartz, & Davidov, 2011). In several postcommunist Eastern European countries, fewer relationships were found between ideology and values; in the Czech Republic, *right-wing* ideology was associated with the openness to change values (plus achievement) and *left-wing* ideology with security and conformity. Given the mixed results among postcommunist and capitalist democratic countries, we tentatively expected the self-transcendence and openness to change values to be more important among those further to the right in China, and the conservation and self-enhancement values to be more important among those further to the left in China (RQ20).

Jost’s (2017b) review of elective-affinity research on correlations between ideology and brand preferences found among others, relationships between left-wing beliefs and a greater desire to try new brands, and right-wing beliefs and a greater preference for domestic over foreign brands. We expected a greater preference for domestic over foreign brands, and a lower willingness to try new brands, among those further to the left in China (RQ21).

Method

Participants

We employed a polling company to give a survey to a nationally representative sample of urban residents of mainland China using an online panel ($n = 509$, after eliminating for failed attention checks). This number of participants was selected after using G*Power to determine the sample size required for $(1 - \beta) = .95$ (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). Based on previous meta-analytic results, our sample size provided 95% power for all variables for which weighted effect sizes had been previously calculated, other than conscientiousness, cognitive reflection, threat sensitivity, and need for cognition (Jost, 2017a).

Participants were selected by the company to reflect national proportions of gender, age, and education and income levels. Participants' average age was 38.97 years ($SD = 13.69$, range = 18–91); men comprised a bare majority (51.5%, $n = 262$) and women the minority (48.5%, $n = 247$). Levels of education ranged from below primary school (3.5%, $n = 18$), primary school (10.4%, $n = 53$), junior school (25.3%, $n = 129$), high school or technical secondary school (23%, $n = 117$), some college (13.9%, $n = 71$), bachelor's degree (20.2%, $n = 103$), master's degree (3.3%, $n = 17$), and doctoral degree (0.2%, $n = 1$). The median and mean level of reported monthly income was between ¥6000 and ¥7000. A plurality were employed by private enterprises (45.4%, $n = 231$), and the rest were self-employed (13.2%, $n = 67$) or employed by state-owned or -held enterprises (13%, $n = 66$), joint-venture or foreign companies (10.8%, $n = 55$), town and village enterprises (3.5%, $n = 18$), the party or government (2.8%, $n = 14$), collective enterprises (2.4%, $n = 12$), or non-profits or social service organizations (1.8%, $n = 9$); the rest worked as farmers (3.7%, $n = 19$) or were unemployed (3.5%, $n = 18$).

Measures

Moral Foundations

We used the Mandarin Chinese MFQ20 scale ($\alpha = .81$; binding foundations [authority, loyalty, purity] $\alpha = .71$; individuating foundations [care, fairness] $\alpha = .64$) by Buchtel, Wu, Hornbeck, Ma, Li, Leung, Zhang, and Zhang from the moralfoundations.org website. A sample item measuring the moral sense of purity is “People should not do things that are disgusting, even if no one is harmed,” and level of agreement/relevance to moral judgment was measured from 0 (*Strongly disagree/not at all relevant*) to 5 (*Strongly agree/extremely relevant*). An MFQ “progressivism” (referring to correlations found in the West) measure can be calculated by subtracting the mean of responses to the authority, loyalty, and purity items from the mean of responses to the care and fairness items.

Ideology

Pan and Xu's (2015) analysis of over 170,000 participants taking the CPC survey found a single left-right dimension covering political, economic, and social issues. Their subsequent analysis of over 470,000 results found that a slightly better fit to the data was provided by three dimensions—nationalism, market orientation, and tradition—that were strongly correlated, such that most participants were either nationalistic, antimarket, and pro-tradition, or took the opposite positions (Pan & Xu, 2018; cf. Wu & Meng, 2017). Because survey length and comparability with Western studies were primary concerns, we selected the top half of political, economic, and cultural questions by factor loading on the left-right dimension ($\alpha = .67$). However, the polling company required us to remove 12 of the 20 political questions due to perceived political sensitivity, so we had to devise

two new questions. A sample item is “Human rights take precedence over sovereignty,” and level of agreement was measured as in the original CPC, four options from -2 (*Strongly oppose*) to 2 (*Strongly agree*). Participants were then asked to classify their ideology on a 0–100 left-right sliding scale for comparison.

Selective Exposure, Interest, Media Use

Participants were told that now that their political opinions had been measured, would they like to receive a few articles “that provide arguments for political opinions you disagree with.” Next, they were asked how often they seek to learn about political opinions differing from their own, from 0 (*Never*) to 4 (*Always*). Participants were then asked for their level of interest in political issues and debates, from 1 (*Not interested*) to 10 (*Very interested*), and how often they read, listen to, or watch political news or debates in the media, from 1 (*Never*) to 10 (*Every day*).

Meaning of Equality

We asked participants whether their first thought of “equality” was political (open elections, right to vote) or economic (wealth and income at similar levels), and whether they thought “a perfectly free market, with no government interference, will naturally lead to more or less economic equality.”

Personality

To avoid content-predictor overlap in some longer versions (Charney, 2015), we used Carciofo, Yang, Song, Du, and Zhang’s (2016) Chinese language 10-item Big Five Personality (BFI-10) inventory; a sample item is “I see myself as someone who is outgoing, sociable,” and level of agreement was measured from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*).

System Justification

We used Tan, Liu, Huang, Zheng, and Liang’s (2016) eight-item ($\alpha = .86$) general system-justification scale. A sample item is “China serves the greatest good for its citizens,” and level of agreement was measured from 1 (*Completely disagree*) to 9 (*Completely agree*).

Cognitive Reflection

We used Toplak, West, and Stanovich’s (2014) seven-item CRT-7 scale, with minor changes to monetary units and objects (e.g., “baseball and bat” to “racket and birdie”). A sample item is “A man buys a pig for ¥600, sells it for ¥700, buys it back for ¥800, and sells it finally for ¥900. How much has he made?” Due to comparative features of open-ended, two-answer, and four-answer variations of the CRT-7, we used the four-answer version (Sirota & Juanchich, 2018); the correct response was ¥200, the intuitive (Type 1 processing) response was ¥100, and ¥0 and ¥300 options were also offered.

Schwartz Values

We used Lindeman and Verkasalo’s (2005) Short Schwartz Value Survey (SSVS), which contains items like “Power (social power, authority, wealth)” with level of importance measured from

0 (*Opposed to my principles*) to 8 (*Of supreme importance*). To control for differences in acquiescent responding, we centered participants' responses around their within-person means, following Schwartz (1992).

Dogmatism

We used Altemeyer's (2002) DOG dogmatism scale. To minimize survey length, we selected the top half of items ($\alpha = .64$) by factor loading (Crowson, 2009). A sample item is "My opinions are right and will stand the test of time," and agreement was measured from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*).

Personal Need for Structure

We used Wu's (2011) 11-item ($\alpha = .75$) Chinese version of the Personal Need for Structure (PNS) scale. A sample item is "I don't like situations that are uncertain," and agreement was measured from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly agree*).

Social Dominance Orientation

We used Tan, Liu, Zheng, and Huang's (2016) Chinese version of the SDO scale. However, the polling company determined that seven items were too politically sensitive and were removed; the remaining nine items had an acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .70$). A sample item is "If certain groups of people stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems," and agreement was measured from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*).

Cohesiveness

Participants viewed Bettache and Chiu's (2018) individuated versus homogenized group-animated video, which portrays one group of humanoid characters moving in lockstep and another moving in uncoordinated fashion, and they were asked to report to which group they would want to belong, indicating a preference for "loose" or "tight" sociocultural groups.

Bullshit Receptivity

We selected the top five items ($\alpha = .66$) by item-total correlation from Pennycook, Cheyne, Barr, Koehler, and Fugelsang's (2015) bullshit-receptivity scale, containing items like "Imagination is inside exponential space time events." Profundity was rated from 1 (*Not at all profound*) to 5 (*Very profound*).

Authoritarianism

To avoid the aforementioned problem of content-predictor overlap, we used Im's (2014) authoritarianism scale using items from the Asian Barometer Survey. After one item was removed by the polling company for political sensitivity, the scale included seven items ($\alpha = .65$), for instance, "A person should not insist on his own opinion if his coworkers disagree with him." Level of agreement was measured from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 4 (*Strongly agree*).

Insecure Attachment

We used Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, and Vogel's (2007) Experiences in Close Relationship Scale-short form, which contains six items each for avoidant ($\alpha = .69$) and anxious ($\alpha = .68$) attachment. Sample items include "I try to avoid getting too close to my partner" and "I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner"; agreement was rated from 0 (*Does not apply to me at all*) to 5 (*Applies very well*).

Need for Cognition

We used Kao's (1994) Chinese short version of the Need for Cognition (NFC) scale, which contains 18 items ($\alpha = .87$). A sample item is "I would prefer complex to simple problems," and agreement was measured from 0 (*Does not apply at all*) to 5 (*Applies very well*).

Intolerance of Ambiguity

We used the shortened, seven-item ($\alpha = .66$) version of Budner's intolerance of ambiguity scale (Kirton, 1981). A sample item is "What we are used to is always preferable to what is unfamiliar," and agreement was measured from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly agree*).

Need for Cognitive Closure

We used Roets and Van Hiel's (2011) 15-item ($\alpha = .83$) version of the Need for Closure Scale (NFCS). A sample item is "When I have made a decision, I feel relieved," and agreement was measured from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly agree*).

Death Anxiety

We used the four-item ($\alpha = .92$) fear of death subscale from Cai, Tang, Wu, and Li's (2017) Chinese Scale of Death Anxiety. A sample item was "In the past month, I often felt terrified when I thought of death," and agreement was measured from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*).

Disgust and Threat Sensitivity

Threat and disgust sensitivity were measured by displaying three ($\alpha = .86$) threatening (pictures number 6230, 6350, 9635.1) and three ($\alpha = .88$) disgusting (pictures number 3103, 9302, 9322) images from the International Affective Picture System database (Lang, Bradley, & Cuthbert, 2008) and asking for participants' ratings from 0 (*It isn't threatening/I am not disgusted at all*) to 10 (*I'm extremely disgusted/It is extremely threatening*). (A pilot study indicated significant ideological asymmetries in disgust and threat sensitivity using this method.)

Consumer Behavior

At the polling company's suggestion, to avoid the appearance of an overtly political focus, we added questions asking participants to state the frequency with which they try new brands, from 0 (*Always stick to the same brand*) to 10 (*Always try new brands*), and to rate three famous foreign and domestic brands, from 0 (*Very bad*) to 10 (*Very good*).

Power Ladder

To measure perceived socioeconomic standing, we asked participants to place themselves on a power ladder, from 1 to 8, representing “where people stand in our society” (Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000).

Procedure

All participants completed an online questionnaire including the measures described above. Our strategy was to explore whether the same correlations between psychological traits and political ideology found in Western countries would be found in China and, if so, which traits would be related to different aspects of ideology. After giving their consent, participants were directed to follow the instructions on screen in answering the questions. Past research in China has found that controversial questions elicit high levels of social desirability bias (Meng, Pan, & Yang, 2017). To minimize such bias, we began the survey with a bogus pipeline manipulation, which urges participants to give honest answers even when others might not approve of them, since their *true* opinions would be detected by *sophisticated techniques* (this is illustrated with a simple example). This method has proven successful in reducing social desirability bias in past research (Roese & Jamieson, 1993). We also included attention-check questions throughout the survey (two were included in the moral foundations survey, and a simple math problem and a question instructing participants to select none of the answers were also included). In the end, all participants were asked to provide basic demographic data before signing off the webpage.

Results

Pan and Xu’s (2015, 2018) principal component analyses (PCA) of the opt-in CPC survey data found the first PC to explain significantly more variance than subsequent PCs (17% vs. 5.4%, 19% vs. 6%). We performed the same analysis on our sample to look for differences between their (presumably) more politically interested respondents and ours with a more average level of political interest and knowledge. Our representative sample demonstrated far less ideological constraint: The first PC explains only 12.1% of the variance, the second PC, 11.6%, and the third, 5.8%. The KMO value (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy) = .74, and the significant Bartlett’s test of sphericity, $\chi^2(300) = 1630.5$ ($p < .001$), indicated suitable conditions for PCA. Both PCs reflected a left-right split, with the first PC loading most strongly on political, economic, and cultural items expected to be endorsed by the left, and the second PC loading most strongly on items expected to be endorsed by the right, with two (cultural-item) exceptions each. (See Appendix A for scree plot and factor loadings.) Self-reported ideology on a left-right scale did not correlate with scores from our ideology questionnaire, not a surprising result given that left/right or liberal/conservative distinctions do not animate political discourse in China’s mass media.

Like Pan and Xu’s (2015) opt-in sample, ours displayed a slight difference in ideology by age, with those 18–39 (roughly corresponding to the Millennial generation in the United States) slightly (but nonsignificantly) further to the conservative left than those 40 and older on economic and political issues and further to the liberal right on social/cultural issues ($M = -.038$, $SD = .574$) than those older than 40 ($M = -.156$, $SD = .571$); $t(507) = -2.32$, $p < .05$ (cf. Harmel & Yeh, 2015). (See Appendix B for visualizations.) There were no significant differences in ideology between men and women. The only significant difference in ideology by income level was the lowest quartile being further to the conservative left on economic issues ($M = -.482$, $SD = .509$) than those in the top three quartiles ($M = -.341$, $SD = .490$); $t(507) = 2.50$, $p < .05$. The only significant difference in ideology

by level of education was the highest quartile being further to the liberal right ($M = .003$, $SD = .589$) than the bottom three quartiles ($M = -.120$, $SD = .568$); $t(507) = 2.02$, $p < .05$.

Means, standard deviations, and t tests of mean differences (between the left-most and right-most halves of the sample, by ideology scores) on all variables of interest are reported in Appendix C. Bivariate correlations between variables of interest and economic, political, social/cultural, and overall ideology are reported in Table 1.

Of 21 research questions, results matched our expectations in nine cases, four received partial support, three were directly contradicted, and five received no support. Among epistemic traits, RQ1, that conscientiousness would be higher on the left, and openness, extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness would be higher on the right, received partial support. Conscientiousness and left-wing ideology evinced the strongest relationship, but openness and agreeableness were also associated with the left. RQ2, that cognitive reflection would be higher on the right, was directly contradicted by the results. Cognitive reflection was higher on the left, and intuitive answers were more common on the right. RQ3, that dogmatism would be higher on the left, was partially supported: Only social/cultural ideology evinced the expected relationship with dogmatism. Overall, there was a weak, marginally significant relationship with right-wing ideology, driven by a significant relationship with right-wing *political* ideology. RQ4, that need for structure would be higher on the left, was supported by the results. RQ5, that bullshit receptivity would be higher on the left, was also supported. Need for cognition (RQ6), which an a priori power analysis indicated would require double and triple our sample size for 80% and 95% power, respectively, received no support from the nonsignificant findings. RQ7 and RQ8, that intolerance of ambiguity and need for cognitive closure, respectively, would be higher on the left, were supported.

Among existential traits, RQ9 and RQ10, that system-justification tendency and authoritarianism would be higher on the left, were supported by the results. However, RQ11 and RQ12, that threat and disgust sensitivity and fear of death would be higher on the left, received no support. (Our a priori power analysis indicated that we had less than 80% power to detect the effect of threat sensitivity with our sample size.)

Among relational traits, RQ13, that social dominance orientation would be higher on the left, was contradicted by the results: SDO was higher on the right in China, as it is in Western countries. RQ14, that a preference for cohesive, tight groups would be higher on the left, received no support. RQ15, that anxious and avoidant attachment would be higher on the left, was directly contradicted by the results: Instead, both were significantly higher on the right, except on social/cultural ideology, where they were related to the conservative left. RQ16, that power-ladder rankings of socioeconomic status would be higher on the left, was also supported by the results.

RQ17, that those further to the liberal right would be higher in “moral progressivism”—the difference between the importance of care and fairness, and that of loyalty, authority, and purity—was supported. Unexpectedly, the conservative left does not fit the moral foundations profile of the Western right: They are higher on the three “binding” foundations, but also on one of the “individuating” foundations, fairness. H18, that selective exposure would be higher among the conservative left, was not supported; self-reported desires to learn about and try to understand “the other side” did not vary by ideology. We also found, perhaps unsurprisingly, that those reporting more attention to political news tended toward the conservative left. RQ19, that those on the liberal right would be more likely to think of “equality” as political rather than economic, and to believe that a perfectly free market would reduce inequality, was supported.

RQ20, that the self-transcendence and openness to change values would be more important to the right, and the conservation and self-enhancement values would be more important on the left, received partial support. Composite measurements of self-enhancement values minus self-transcendence values, and conservation values minus openness values, reveal that the right tends to endorse self-transcendence values more than self-enhancement values, as expected, but the left tends

Table 1. Bivariate Correlations: Psychological Traits and Political Ideology (−2 Conservative left, +2 Liberal right)

Measurement/Scale	Details	Ideology			
		(Combined)	(Economic)	(Political)	(Social/Cultural)
MFQ	(0–5) Care	−.036	−.004	−.063	.006
MFQ	(0–5) Fairness	−.137**	−.110*	−.167**	.065
MFQ	(0–5) Loyalty	−.221***	−.160***	−.268***	.07
MFQ	(0–5) Authority	−.200***	−.178***	−.155***	−.032
MFQ	(0–5) Purity	−.160***	−.140**	−.143**	.002
MFQ	(0–5) Progressivism	.175***	.159***	.131**	.03
Learn about other side	0 no	.002	.025	.017	−.066
	1 yes				
Understand other side	0–4 (greater desire)	.013	−.010	.056	−.042
Political interest	1–10	−.040	−.062	−.012	.006
News media use	1–10	−.106*	−.101*	−.067	−.032
“Equality” means	0 Political	−.196***	−.171***	−.073†	−.179***
	1 Economic				
Free market causes	0 inequality	.206***	.204***	.187***	−.050
	1 equality				
Personality	(1–5) Extraversion	.003	−.012	−.026	.075†
Personality	(1–5) Agreeableness	−.165***	−.121**	−.194***	.044
Personality	(1–5)	−.264***	−.233***	−.245***	.025
	Conscientiousness				
Personality	(1–5) Neuroticism	−.006	.034	.001	−.079†
Personality	(1–5) Openness	−.086†	−.034	−.097*	−.032
System Justification	1–9	−.237***	−.184***	−.242***	.018
Cognitive reflection	(0–7) Correct	−.125***	−.079†	−.147**	.010
Cognitive reflection	(0–7) Intuitive	.106*	.084†	.098*	.008
Schwartz values	(0–8) Power	−.026	.033	−.107*	.053
Schwartz values	(0–8) Achievement	.076†	.058	.108*	−.057
Schwartz values	(0–8) Hedonism	−.171***	−.139**	−.170***	.015
Schwartz values	(0–8) Stimulation	−.237***	−.131**	−.271***	−.022
Schwartz values	(0–8) Self-Direction	−.052	−.046	−.005	−.072
Schwartz values	(0–8) Universalism	.126**	.133**	.108*	−.034
Schwartz values	(0–8) Benevolence	.135**	.034	.203***	−.022
Schwartz values	(0–8) Tradition	.137**	.032	.091*	.205***
Schwartz values	(0–8) Conformity	.017	.006	.024	−.001
Schwartz values	(0–8) Security	.136**	.091*	.203***	−.099*
Schwartz values	Enhancement minus	−.134**	−.078†	−.168***	.021
	Transcendence				
Schwartz values	Conservation minus	.229***	.138**	.237***	.047
	Openness				
Dogmatism	1–7	.081†	.072	.134**	−.110*
Personal Need for	1–6	−.257***	−.170***	−.252***	−.051
Security					
SDO		.189***	.090*	.221***	.035
Cohesiveness	0 Tight	−.011	−.023	−.007	.017
	1 Loose				
Bullshit receptivity	1–5	−.111*	−.089*	−.138**	−.057
Authoritarianism	1–4	−.188***	−.117**	−.152**	−.105**
Anxious attachment	1–6	.088*	.076†	.130**	−.092*
Avoidant attachment	1–6	.188***	.124**	.250***	−.078†
Need for Cognition	0–5	−.043	−.058	−.041	.041
Ambiguity intolerance	1–6	−.136**	−.050	−.158***	−.054
Need for Closure	1–6	−.154**	−.070	−.145**	−.094*
Death anxiety	1–5	−.037	−.026	−.008	−.054

(Continues)

Table 1. (Continued)

Measurement/Scale	Details	Ideology			
		(Combined)	(Economic)	(Political)	(Social/Cultural)
Disgust sensitivity	0–10	.057	.058	.055	–.022
Threat sensitivity	0–10	–.020	–.034	.034	–.022
Try new brands	0–10	–.100*	–.034	–.109*	–.058
Domestic—Foreign brand preference	–10–10	–.176***	–.135**	–.140**	–.063
Power ladder	1–8	–.076†	–.112*	–.007	–.025

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; † $p < .10$

to endorse openness values more than conservation values, contrary to expectations. The conservation versus openness result was driven by the greater importance of hedonism and stimulation on the left and tradition and security on the right, and the self-enhancement versus self-transcendence result was driven by the greater importance of universalism and benevolence on the right and hedonism on the left (although achievement was weakly associated with the right). RQ21 was partially supported: Those on the liberal right reported a lower preference for domestic over foreign brands but reported *less* willingness to try new brands.

Discussion

Our representative sample demonstrated less ideological constraint than previous opt-in samples, while still clustering around the conservative left-liberal right split on political, economic, and social/cultural issues (Pan & Xu, 2015, 2018). We are not aware of public-opinion surveys in China equivalent to those in the United States which have found, over several decades, a widespread ignorance of the content of liberal and conservative ideology (e.g., Kinder & Kalmoe, 2017). Nonetheless, echoing Azevedo et al.'s (2019) U.S. findings, in our sample psychological traits predicted taking issue positions consistent with the prevailing ideological cleavage in China. Demographic characteristics vastly underperformed psychological traits in predicting political ideology. (See Appendix D for regression results.)

According to Max Weber's test of social science theories, the theory that ideology evinces elective affinities with psychological traits receives support from the results—that is, it also seems to apply in China. A majority of the research questions replicating previous research in Western countries were fully or partially supported within our Chinese sample. Arendt's conjecture that after a (left-wing) revolution ardent revolutionaries would become conservatives, was prescient; if not a day, then at least after a generation or two those with the psychological traits associated with the right in the West evince an elective affinity with the left-wing ideas institutionalized and established as the status quo.

Epistemic traits most clearly evinced this “left is (psychologically) right” pattern. Existential traits mostly displayed the same pattern, but relational traits evinced mixed and unexpected results. Moral psychology also mostly reflected the “left is (psychological) right” pattern, with “moral progressivism” higher on the right. Likewise, this pattern was partially found in Schwartz values and Big Five personality traits.

However, the plurality of mixed and null results suggests that a simple “left is (psychologically) right” description of elective affinities in China is incomplete. As expected, system justification was higher among the conservative left, whose ideological forebears won a civil war to form a government nearly a century ago; as in France, where long-institutionalized principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity incline *leftists* toward greater system justification (Langer et al., 2020). However, several unexpected results require explanation. Dogmatism, found to be higher among U.S. conservatives,

was found to be higher among supporters of representative democracy in China. Cognitive reflection, found to be higher among U.S. liberals, was found to be higher among supporters of CCP rule and greater state economic intervention in China. SDO, higher among U.S. conservatives, was found to be higher among those favoring free markets and competitive elections in China. What can account for these relationships?

One potential factor is the arbitrariness or indeterminacy of the links between psychological needs and political commitments that arise from varying interpretations of key concepts and expectations about the results of different policies. If “equality” is conceived according to the liberal right, it is a matter of flattening hierarchies in political voice or influence; but conceived according to the conservative left, it is a matter of flattening hierarchies of economic power and wealth. One who believes that “free markets” lead to greater economic equality may be attracted to ideological positions the opposite of those who believe that they lead to greater *inequality* in wealth and income—even if both have similar psychological needs and motivations. However, differences of this sort in expectations and interpretations are hardly unique to China and cannot fully account for the unexpected relationships found here.

Dogmatism correlating with liberal-right ideology was perhaps our most counterintuitive finding: Why would an unshakeable certainty in one’s beliefs *not* be more common among those whose ideology hews closely to the official line of a one-party state? One possibility is that much of the content of liberal-right ideology in China is the mainstream, dominant position in most of the world: free-market capitalist democracy. In China, one can find support for the content of conservative-left ideology in the media and schools; but one can also find support for the content of liberal-right ideology in those same domestic institutions and, in addition, in most of the rest of the outside world. Hence from a global perspective, those higher in dogmatism would find far greater support for liberal-right ideology than its opposite, making it a more attractive refuge for those desiring a certainty in their beliefs that only international majority support can provide. Dogmatic individuals would find domestic support for conservative-left ideology, but outside of China, its contents are widely considered anachronistic, holdovers from before the “end of history,” swimming against the contemporary tide.

This may also explain the unexpected result of cognitive reflection being higher on the conservative left. For those inclined toward quick, effortless judgment, aligning oneself with the position of a sizeable portion of the domestic elite *and* the overwhelmingly dominant position in most of the world outside of China may be an easy, “no-brainer” judgment. For those higher in cognitive reflection, an initial inclination to align oneself with a global majority (and a considerable portion of the ruling party) may be overruled by other considerations. For instance, one might view the Great Leap Forward famine as conclusive proof that the structure of government in China is irredeemably flawed, possibly even evil—an intuitive, quick, and evidence-based judgment, inclining one toward the liberal right. But when comparing excess mortality in communist China versus capitalist-democracy India, Drèze and Sen (1989) conclude that “despite the gigantic size of excess mortality in the Chinese famine, the extra mortality in India from regular deprivation in normal times vastly overshadows the former ... India seems to manage to fill its cupboard with more skeletons every eight years than China put there in its years of shame” (pp. 214–215). This sort of counterintuitive judgment requires greater cognitive reflection (and information), and this may be behind the unexpectedly higher average cognitive reflection on the conservative left.

From this perspective, a greater social dominance orientation on the liberal right in China begins to make more sense. As in Western countries, where SDO correlates with conservative or right-wing ideology, those in China with a greater preference for hierarchy and inequality may see in capitalist democracy an opportunity to insert themselves in their rightful place at the top of the pecking order. Currently stymied by a political-economic system in which the state still occupies the commanding heights, bank credit is disproportionately available to state-owned enterprises, and the CCP exercises

oversight over private enterprises, a “liberal right” turn in governance may be seen as a way to climb the social hierarchy by amassing wealth. Looking at the United States, for instance—with Senator Dick Durbin describing the relationship between big banks and Capitol Hill bluntly: “they frankly own the place” (Ciara Torres-Spelliscy, 2009)—those in China who are high in SDO may see in liberal right ideology an opportunity to translate their economic power into political power.

These interpretations are preliminary and tentative. Further research is needed to uncover precisely which ideological elements meet which psychological needs—particularly for smaller ideological subgroups under the broad conservative left-liberal right umbrella. Not all liberal intellectuals in China have undergone a “Trumpian metamorphosis” (Lin, 2021), seeing in the U.S. populist right a champion of liberalism; others take a position similar to U.S. liberals. Likewise, the New Left or neo-Maoists would likely have a different psychological profile from nationalists, who would both be included in the broad conservative-left category. Neo-Confucians may have a psychological profile more similar to conservatives/rightists in the West, with existential and relational motives drawing them to their stance on social/cultural issues. Smaller ideological subgroups have also been understudied in Western research.

In stark contrast with research in Western countries, where social ideology is generally more strongly linked with psychological traits than economic ideology, in China splits on social/cultural issues were in most cases unassociated with psychological asymmetries. Instead, economic and political (or political-economic) ideology evinced stronger links. There are clear elective affinities in China, but these cluster around issues of political economy: the proper role of the state in the economic system (intervention versus a free market) and the way government should be structured (party leadership versus competitive elections). This could be due to the CPC having overlooked relevant social/cultural issues, faster “turnover” regarding which social/cultural issues are hotly debated compared with political/economic issues, or simply that such issues do not comprise a significant part of China’s contemporary political debates. Perhaps Western countries should be viewed as the outliers, with moral/religious concerns over homosexuality and abortion and cultural/economic concerns over immigration forming an outsized part of political debate, and attracting public attention due to their resonance with psychological characteristics.

Overall, the characterization of the *psychological* left-right divide as consisting of traits inclining people toward desiring change and equality versus tradition and hierarchy looks relevant in China, albeit largely in reverse. That is, the liberal right in China mostly evinces traits of the psychological left in Western countries, inclining them toward desiring change toward open and competitive political elections and economic markets, which are believed to lead to political and economic equality. The conservative left mostly evinces traits of the psychological right in Western countries, inclining them toward desiring the tradition of CCP leadership and political authority, endorsing the political hierarchy this entails. At the same time, they are not inclined toward social dominance and they desire greater economic equality, a goal toward which they entrust the government with leadership. The results may also fit with the protection versus freedom dichotomy, with the conservative left finding needs for protection met by supporting the existing government and a strong social safety net, and the liberal right’s need for freedom met by endorsing greater political liberty and freer markets.

However, since the freedom versus protection conceptualization relies on right-wing social positions matching with left-wing economic positions, the present results lend greater support to the equality/change versus hierarchy/stasis conceptualization of elective affinities. Alternatively, perhaps in China “political” issues are the equivalent of “social” issues in the West; that is, debates over whether China should be governed through multiparty elections or the Communist Party meet the same range of psychological needs as debates over immigration and gay rights do in Western countries. (Relationships between psychological traits and “political” ideology were generally stronger than economic ideology.)

Limitations

It should be noted that our use of a long, omnibus survey was required to test a wide range of trait-ideology correlations, but the attention required for such a long survey may have added to statistical noise. Shorter surveys covering a narrower range of psychological traits may provide more accurate results. Likewise, narrower surveys can use longer versions of individual scales, providing more faithful comparability with prior research. While the present research provides evidence that elective affinities exist in the Chinese context, there is still a long way to go in building a theory of ideology as motivated social cognition in China. The present evidence is suggestive, but much more research is needed to trace how entire ideological packages (from the broad categorization used here, to minority ideological groupings from neo-Maoism to pro-Trump liberalism) meet sets of psychological needs. Additionally, participants may have felt uncomfortable giving their true responses to politically charged questions, particularly in the context of China, even with survey anonymity and the bogus pipeline manipulation. Lastly, the survey company's software did not allow for the randomization of survey components (as opposed to items within a scale); hence order effects may have affected results.

Conclusion

Elective affinities, and the theory of ideology as motivated social cognition, looks to be on an incrementally sounder footing. That several relationships between psychological traits and political ideology were found in a radically different political-economic and cultural context from those of the West indicates that such elective affinities may be universal, although appearing in combinations that vary by culture and political-economic context. In other words, psychological traits—which on their face would seem to have nothing to do with ideology—are nonetheless related to ideology in radically different political and cultural contexts. These elective affinities are important to understand, as they promise to illuminate precisely how psychological traits give rise to inclinations and desires that can be met by the varying political beliefs or opinions on offer in different information ecologies. This is of intrinsic interest, but it may have practical applications as well: Political messaging that takes into account psychological traits of opposed ideological groups may prove more effective than traditional approaches (e.g., Lammers & Baldwin, 2018; Wolsko, Ariceaga, & Seiden, 2016). Further research, particularly in diverse contexts, is due.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was funded by a generous grant from The Chinese University of Hong Kong Faculty of Social Science (Direct Grant for Research #4051085). The authors would like to thank Prof. Chi-yue Chiu for his assistance. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Peter Beattie, Faculty of Social Science, 516A Chen Kou Bun Building, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, N.T., Hong Kong SAR. E-mail: pbeattie@cuhk.edu.hk

REFERENCES

- Adler, N. E., Epel, E. S., Castellazzo, G., & Ickovics, J. R. (2000). Relationship of subjective and objective social status with psychological and physiological functioning: Preliminary data in healthy, White women. *Health Psychology, 19*(6), 586–592. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0278-6133.19.6.586>
- Altemeyer, B. (2002). Dogmatic behavior among students: Testing a new measure of dogmatism. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 142*(6), 713–721. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224540209603931>

- Ashton, M. C., Danso, H. A., Maio, G., Esses, V. M., Bond, M. H., & Keung, D. (2005). Two dimensions of political attitudes and their individual difference correlates: A cross-cultural perspective. In R. M. Sorrentino, D. Cohen, J. M. Olsen, & M. P. Zanna (Eds.), *Culture and social behavior* (Vol. 10, pp. 1–30). Manwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Azevedo, F., Jost, J. T., Rothmund, T., & Sterling, J. (2019). Neoliberal ideology and the justification of inequality in capitalist societies: Why social and economic dimensions of ideology are intertwined. *Journal of Social Issues, 75*(1), 49–88. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12310>
- Beattie, P. (2017). The “chicken-and-egg” development of political opinions: The roles of genes, social status, ideology, and information. *Politics and the Life Sciences, 36*(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1017/pls.2017.1>
- Beattie, P. (2019). *Social evolution, political psychology, and the media in democracy: The invisible hand in the U.S. marketplace of ideas*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02801-5>
- Beattie, P., Bettache, K., & Chong, K. C. Y. (2019). Who is the neoliberal? Exploring neoliberal beliefs across east and west. *Journal of Social Issues, 75*(1), 20–48. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12309>
- Bettache, K., & Chiu, C. Y. (2018). The populist effect: Threat and the handover of freedom. *Personality and Individual Differences, 130*, 102–106. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.03.055>
- Bettache, K., & Chiu, C. Y. (2019). Why American conservatives and individuals from traditionalist cultures may share a preference for group uniformity. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology, 22*(3), 325–330. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajsp.12356>
- Bettache, K., Hamamura, T., Amrani Idrissi, J., Amenyogbo, R. G. J., & Chiu, C. Y. (2019). Monitoring moral virtue: When the moral transgressions of in-group members are judged more severely. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 50*(2), 268–284. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022118814687>
- Blanchette, J. (2019). *China's new Red Guards: the return of radicalism and the rebirth of Mao Zedong*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Bramall, C. (2008). *Chinese economic development*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Cai, W., Tang, Y. L., Wu, S., & Li, H. (2017). Scale of Death Anxiety (SDA): Development and validation. *Frontiers in Psychology, 8*, 858. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00858>
- Caprara, G. V., & Vecchione, M. (2018). On the left and right ideological divide: Historical accounts and contemporary perspectives. *Political Psychology, 39*, 49–83. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12476>
- Caprara, G. V., Vecchione, M., Schwartz, S. H., Schoen, H., Bain, P. G., Silvester, J., ... Caprara, M. G. (2017). Basic values, ideological self-placement, and voting: A cross-cultural study. *Cross-Cultural Research, 51*, 388–411. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069397117712194>
- Carciolo, R., Yang, J., Song, N., Du, F., & Zhang, K. (2016). Psychometric evaluation of Chinese-language 44-item and 10-item big five personality inventories, including correlations with chronotype, mindfulness and mind wandering. *PLoS ONE, 11*(2), e0149963. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0149963>
- Charney, E. (2015). Liberal bias and the five-factor model. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 38*, e139. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X14001174>
- Ciara Torres-Spelliscy, C. (2009, April 30). *Durbin: The banks own Capitol Hill*. Brennan Center for Justice. Retrieved from <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/durbin-banks-own-capitol-hill>
- Cichocka, A., & Dhont, K. (2018). The personality bases of political ideology and behavior. In V. Zeigler-Hill & T. K. Shackelford (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of personality and individual differences* (pp. 323–352). London, United Kingdom: SAGE.
- Crawford, J. T. (2017). Are conservatives more sensitive to threat than liberals? It depends on how we define threat and conservatism. *Social Cognition, 35*(4), 354–373. <https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.2017.35.4.354>
- Crowson, H. M. (2009). Does the DOG scale measure dogmatism? Another look at construct validity. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 149*(3), 365–383. <https://doi.org/10.3200/SOCP.149.3.365-383>
- Deppe, K. D., Gonzalez, F. J., Neiman, J. L., Jacobs, C., Pahlke, J., Smith, K. B., & Hibbing, J. R. (2015). Reflective liberals and intuitive conservatives: A look at the Cognitive Reflection Test and ideology. *Judgment and Decision Making, 10*(4), 314–332.
- Drèze, J., & Sen, A. (1989). *Hunger and public action*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Fatke, M. (2017). Personality traits and political ideology: A first global assessment. *Political Psychology, 38*(5), 881–899. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12347>
- Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Buchner, A., & Lang, A.-G. (2009). Statistical power analyses using G*Power 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses. *Behavior Research Methods, 41*, 1149–1160. <https://doi.org/10.3758/BRM.41.4.1149>
- Fogel, J. A., Cheek, T., & Ownby, D. (Eds.). (2019). *Voices from the Chinese Century: Public intellectual debate from contemporary China*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Graham, J., Haidt, J., Koleva, S., Motyl, M., Iyer, R., Wojcik, S. P., & Ditto, P. H. (2013). Moral foundations theory: The pragmatic validity of moral pluralism. In P. Devine & A. Plant (Eds.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 47, pp. 55–130). Cambridge, MA: Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-407236-7.00002-4>

- Graham, J., Haidt, J., & Nosek, B. A. (2009). Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(5), 1029–1046. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015141>
- Harmel, R., & Yeh, Y. Y. (2015). China's age cohorts: Differences in political attitudes and behavior. *Social Science Quarterly*, 96(1), 214–234.
- Hart-Landsberg, M., & Burkett, P. (2005). *China and socialism: Market reforms and class struggle*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.
- Hibbing, J. R., Smith, K. B., & Alford, J. R. (2014). Differences in negativity bias underlie variations in political ideology. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 37(3), 297–307. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X13001192>
- Im, D. K. (2014). The legitimization of inequality: Psychosocial dispositions, education, and attitudes toward income inequality in China. *Sociological Perspectives*, 57(4), 506–525. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0731121414536883>
- Jenco, L. (2013). Chinese political ideologies. In M. Freedom, L. T. Sargent, & M. Stears (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political ideologies* (pp. 644–660). Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Ji, C., & Jiang, J. (2020). Enlightened one-party rule? Ideological differences between Chinese communist party members and the mass public. *Political Research Quarterly*, 73(3), 651–666.
- Jiang, S. (2018). Philosophy and history: Interpreting the 'Xi Jinping era' through Xi's report to the Nineteenth National Congress of the CCP. *Reading the China Dream*, 19. <https://www.readingthechinadream.com/jiang-shigong-philosophy-and-history.html>
- Jost, J. T. (2017a). Ideological asymmetries and the essence of political psychology. *Political Psychology*, 38(2), 167–208. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12407>
- Jost, J. T. (2017b). The marketplace of ideology: "Elective affinities" in political psychology and their implications for consumer behavior. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 27(4), 502–520. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2017.07.003>
- Jost, J. T., Banaji, M. R., & Nosek, B. A. (2004). A decade of system justification theory: Accumulated evidence of conscious and unconscious bolstering of the status quo. *Political Psychology*, 25(6), 881–919. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2004.00402.x>
- Jost, J. T., Basevich, E., Dickson, E. S., & Noorbaloochi, S. (2016). The place of values in a world of politics: Personality, motivation, and ideology. In T. Brosch, D. Sander, F. Clément, J. A. Deonna, E. Fehr, & P. Veilleumier (Eds.), *Handbook of value: Perspectives from economics, neuroscience, philosophy, psychology, and sociology* (pp. 351–374). Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Jost, J. T., Federico, C. M., & Napier, J. L. (2009). Political ideology: Its structure, functions, and elective affinities. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60, 307–337. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163600>
- Jost, J. T., Glaser, J., Kruglanski, A. W., & Sulloway, F. J. (2003). Political conservatism as motivated social cognition. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(3), 339–375.
- Jost, J. T., Krochik, M., Gaucher, D., & Hennes, E. P. (2009). Can a psychological theory of ideological differences explain contextual variability in the contents of political attitudes? *Psychological Inquiry*, 20(2–3), 183–188.
- Jost, J. T., Liviatan, I., van der Toorn, J., Ledgerwood, A., Mandisodza, A., & Nosek, B. A. (2011). System justification: How do we know it's motivated? In D. R. Bobocel, A. C. Kay, M. P. Zanna, & J. M. Olson (Eds.), *The psychology of justice and legitimacy* (pp. 187–218). New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Jost, J. T., Nam, H. H., Amodio, D. M., & Van Bavel, J. J. (2014). Political neuroscience: The beginning of a beautiful friendship. *Advances in Political Psychology*, 35, 3–42. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12162>
- Jost, J. T., Sterling, J., & Stern, C. (2018). Getting closure on conservatism, or the politics of epistemic and existential motivation. In C. E. Kopetz & A. Fishbach (Eds.), *The motivation-cognition interface* (pp. 56–87). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jost, J. T., Stern, C., Rule, N. O., & Sterling, J. (2017). The politics of fear: Is there an ideological asymmetry in existential motivation? *Social Cognition*, 35(4), 324–353. <https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.2017.35.4.324>
- Jost, J. T., van der Linden, S., Panagopoulos, C., & Hardin, C. D. (2018). Ideological asymmetries in conformity, desire for shared reality, and the spread of misinformation. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 23, 77–83. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2018.01.003>
- Jou, W. (2010). The heuristic value of the left-right schema in East Asia. *International Political Science Review*, 31(3), 366–394. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512110370721>
- Kao, C. F. (1994). The concept and measure of need for cognition. *Chinese Journal of Psychology*, 36(1), 1–20.
- Kim, K. R., Kang, J. S., & Yun, S. (2012). Moral intuitions and political orientation: Similarities and differences between South Korea and the United States. *Psychological Reports*, 111(1), 173–185.
- Kinder, D. R., & Kalmoe, N. P. (2017). *Neither liberal nor conservative: Ideological innocence in the American public*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Kirton, M. J. (1981). A reanalysis of two scales of tolerance of ambiguity. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 45(4), 407–414. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa4504_10

- Koleva, S. P., & Rip, B. (2009). Attachment style and political ideology: A review of contradictory findings. *Social Justice Research, 22*(2–3), 241–258.
- Kugler, M., Jost, J. T., & Noorbaloochi, S. (2014). Another look at moral foundations theory: Do authoritarianism and social dominance orientation explain liberal-conservative differences in “moral” intuitions? *Social Justice Research, 27*(4), 413–431. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-014-0223-5>
- Lammers, J., & Baldwin, M. (2018). Past-focused temporal communication overcomes conservatives’ resistance to liberal political ideas. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 114*(4), 599. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000121.supp>
- Lang, P. J., Bradley, M. M., & Cuthbert, B. N. (2008). *International affective picture system (IAPS): Affective ratings of pictures and instruction manual* (Technical Report A-8). Gainesville, FL: University of Florida.
- Langer, M., Vasilopoulos, P., McAvay, H., & Jost, J. T. (2020). System justification in France: Liberté, égalité, fraternité. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences, 34*, 185–191.
- Lin, Y. (2021). Beaconism and the Trumpian metamorphosis of Chinese liberal intellectuals. *Journal of Contemporary China, 30*(127), 85–101.
- Lindeman, M., & Verkasalo, M. (2005). Measuring values with the short Schwartz’s value survey. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 85*(2), 170–178. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa8502_09
- Lu, Y., Chu, Y., & Shen, F. (2016). Mass media, new technology, and ideology: An analysis of political trends in China. *Global Media and China, 1*(1–2), 70–101.
- Lynch, D. C. (2015). *China’s futures: PRC elites debate economics, politics, and foreign policy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Malka, A., Lelkes, Y., & Holzer, N. (2017). Rethinking the rigidity of the right model: Three suboptimal methodological practices and their implications. In J. T. Crawford & L. Jussim (Eds.), *Politics of social psychology* (pp. 126–146). New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Malka, A., Lelkes, Y., & Soto, C. J. (2017). Are cultural and economic conservatism positively correlated? A large-scale cross-national test. *British Journal of Political Science, 49*(3), 1045–1069. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123417000072>
- Malka, A., Soto, C. J., Inzlicht, M., & Lelkes, Y. (2014). Do needs for security and certainty predict cultural and economic conservatism? A cross-national analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 106*(6), 1031–1051.
- McFarland, S. G., Ageyev, V. S., & Djintcharadze, N. (1996). Russian authoritarianism two years after communism. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 22*(2), 210–217. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167296222010>
- Meng, T., Pan, J., & Yang, P. (2017). Conditional receptivity to citizen participation: Evidence from a survey experiment in China. *Comparative Political Studies, 50*(4), 399–433. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414014556212>
- Nathan, A. J., & Shi, T. (1996). Left and right with Chinese characteristics: issues and alignments in Deng Xiaoping’s China. *World Politics, 48*(4), 522–550. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.1996.0013>
- Naughton, B. (2017). Is China socialist? *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 31*(1), 3–24.
- Neuberg, S. L., & Newsom, J. T. (1993). Personal need for structure: Individual differences in the desire for simpler structure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 65*(1), 113–131. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.65.1.113>
- Noël, A., & Thérien, J. P. (2008). *Left and right in global politics*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Onraet, E., Van Hiel, A., Dhont, K., & Pattyn, S. (2013). Internal and external threat in relationship with right-wing attitudes. *Journal of Personality, 81*(3), 233–248. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12011>
- Oskarsson, S., Cesarini, D., Dawes, C. T., Fowler, J. H., Johannesson, M., Magnusson, P. K., & Teorell, J. (2015). Linking genes and political orientations: Testing the cognitive ability as mediator hypothesis. *Political Psychology, 36*(6), 649–665. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12230>
- Pan, J., & Xu, Y. (2015). *China’s ideological spectrum* (Research Paper No. 2015-6). Boston, MA: MIT Political Science Department.
- Pan, J., & Xu, Y. (2018). China’s ideological spectrum. *The Journal of Politics, 80*(1), 254–273. <https://doi.org/10.1086/694255>
- Pennycook, G., Cheyne, J. A., Barr, N., Koehler, D. J., & Fugelsang, J. A. (2015). On the reception and detection of pseudo-profound bullshit. *Judgment and Decision Making, 10*(6), 549–563.
- Petersen, M. B., & Aarøe, L. (2014). Individual differences in political ideology are effects of adaptive error management. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 37*(3), 324–325. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X13002690>
- Piurko, Y., Schwartz, S. H., & Davidov, E. (2011). Basic personal values and the meaning of left-right political orientations in 20 countries. *Political Psychology, 32*(4), 537–561. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2011.00828.x>
- Roese, N. J., & Jamieson, D. W. (1993). Twenty years of bogus pipeline research: A critical review and meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 114*(2), 363–375.
- Roets, A., Au, E. W., & Van Hiel, A. (2015). Can authoritarianism lead to greater liking of out-groups? The intriguing case of Singapore. *Psychological Science, 26*(12), 1972–1974.
- Roets, A., & Van Hiel, A. (2011). Item selection and validation of a brief, 15-item version of the need for closure scale. *Personality and Individual Differences, 50*(1), 90–94. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2010.09.004>

- Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. In *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 25, pp. 1–65). Cambridge, MA: Academic Press.
- Seldes, G. (1985). *The great thoughts*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.
- Shi-Kupfer, K., Ohlberg, K., Lang, S., & Lang, B. (2017). *Ideas and ideologies competing for China's political future: How online pluralism challenges official orthodoxy*. Retrieved from <https://www.merics.org/index.php/en/papers-on-china/ideas-and-ideologies-competing-chinas-political-future>
- Sirota, M., & Juanchich, M. (2018). Effect of response format on cognitive reflection: Validating a two-and four-option multiple choice question version of the Cognitive Reflection Test. *Behavior Research Methods*, *50*, 2511–2522. <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13428-018-1029-4>
- Soboleva, I. (2020). *Efficacy, openness, ingenuousness: Micro-foundations of democratic engagement* (Doctoral dissertation). New York, NY: Columbia University. <https://doi.org/10.7916/d8-1hcp-5185>
- Stankov, L. (2017). Conservative syndrome: Individual and cross-cultural differences. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *48*, 950–960. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022117709984>
- Sterling, J., Jost, J. T., & Pennycook, G. (2016). Are neoliberals more susceptible to bullshit? *Judgment and Decision Making*, *11*(4), 352–360.
- Talhelm, T., Haidt, J., Oishi, S., Zhang, X., Miao, F. F., & Chen, S. (2015). Liberals think more analytically (more “WEIRD”) than conservatives. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *41*(2), 250–267.
- Tan, X., Liu, L., Huang, Z., Zheng, W., & Liang, Y. (2016). The effects of general system justification on corruption perception and intent. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *7*, 1107. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01107>
- Tan, X., Liu, L., Zheng, W., & Huang, Z. (2016). Effects of social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism on corrupt intention: The role of moral outrage. *International Journal of Psychology*, *51*(3), 213–219. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.12148>
- Tang, W. (2017). Same bed, different dreams—The bifurcation of the Chinese Communist Party. In W. Shan & L. Yang (Eds.), *Changing state-society relations in contemporary China* (pp. 123–151). Singapore: World Scientific Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1142/9789814618564_0007
- Terrizzi, J. A., Jr., Shook, N. J., & McDaniel, M. A. (2013). The behavioral immune system and social conservatism: A meta-analysis. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, *34*(2), 99–108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2012.10.003>
- Thorisdottir, H., Jost, J. T., Liviatan, I., & Shrout, P. E. (2007). Psychological needs and values underlying left-right political orientation: Cross-national evidence from Eastern and Western Europe. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *71*(2), 175–203. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfm008>
- Toplak, M. E., West, R. F., & Stanovich, K. E. (2014). Assessing miserly information processing: An expansion of the Cognitive Reflection Test. *Thinking & Reasoning*, *20*(2), 147–168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13546783.2013.844729>
- Tybur, J. M., Merriman, L. A., Hooper, A. E. C., McDonald, M. M., & Navarrete, C. D. (2010). Extending the behavioral immune system to political psychology: Are political conservatism and disgust sensitivity really related? *Evolutionary Psychology*, *8*(4), 599–616. <https://doi.org/10.1177/147470491000800406>
- Weber, C., & Federico, C. M. (2007). Interpersonal attachment and patterns of ideological belief. *Political Psychology*, *28*(4), 389–416. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2007.00579.x>
- Weber, M. (1949). *The methodology of the social sciences*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.
- Wei, M., Russell, D. W., Mallinckrodt, B., & Vogel, D. L. (2007). The Experiences in Close Relationship Scale (ECR)-short form: Reliability, validity, and factor structure. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, *88*(2), 187–204. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223890701268041>
- Wolsko, C., Ariceaga, H., & Seiden, J. (2016). Red, white, and blue enough to be green: Effects of moral framing on climate change attitudes and conservation behaviors. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *65*, 7–19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2016.02.005>
- Wu, J. Y. (2019). A spatial valence model of political participation in China. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, *31*(2), 244–259. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0951629819833190>
- Wu, J. (2020). Categorical confusion: Ideological labels in China. Available at SSRN 3699710.
- Wu, M. S. (2011). The dampening effect of need for structure on intergroup altruism after disaster. (Unpublished manuscript).
- Wu, J., & Meng, T. (2017). The nature of ideology in Urban China. *21st Century China Center Research Paper*, (2017-08). <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3038790>
- Xi, J. (2017). *The governance of China II*. Beijing, China: Foreign Languages Press.
- Xi, J. (2020). *The governance of China III*. Beijing, China: Foreign Languages Press.
- Zhang, J., & Zhong, Z. (2019). Life history and system justification: Higher individual fertility and lower provincial life expectancy correlate with stronger progovernment attitudes in China. *Political Psychology*, *40*(2), 355–373.

Appendix A

Component Matrix^a

	Component							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
E4(r)	.543							
P7(r)	.528				-.358	-.445		
E2(r)	.515							-.379
P9(r)	.501							.428
P3(r)	.493			-.411				
E10(r)	.488			.337				
P6(r)	.484		-.388					
P2(r)	.481			-.337				
P5(r)	.481					.343		
E8(r)	.431	.307			-.312			
C3	-.372				.317		.315	
P10		.602						
C1		.587					-.323	
E6		.536						
E5		.524						
P4		.499		-.325			.348	
C2(r)		-.478				.396	.333	
E7		.411					.303	
C4		.408			-.347			-.376
E3(r)		-.339	.498					
P1(r)	.328		-.473	.326	.358			
E1(r)		-.391	.439					
P8				.504				.364
C5(r)	.390				-.337	-.419		.302
E9		.376					-.406	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

^aEight components extracted. (r) indicates reverse scoring.

PCA 1

E4(R) If pork prices are too high, the government should intervene. .543

P7(R) Both primary and secondary-school students or college students should participate in military training arranged by the state. .528

E2(R) Those areas that are related to national security and other important national and people's livelihood must be controlled by state-owned enterprises. .515

P9(R) Once China has fully caught up with the West, private ownership should be reduced, and we should focus on providing education and medical services to everyone. .501

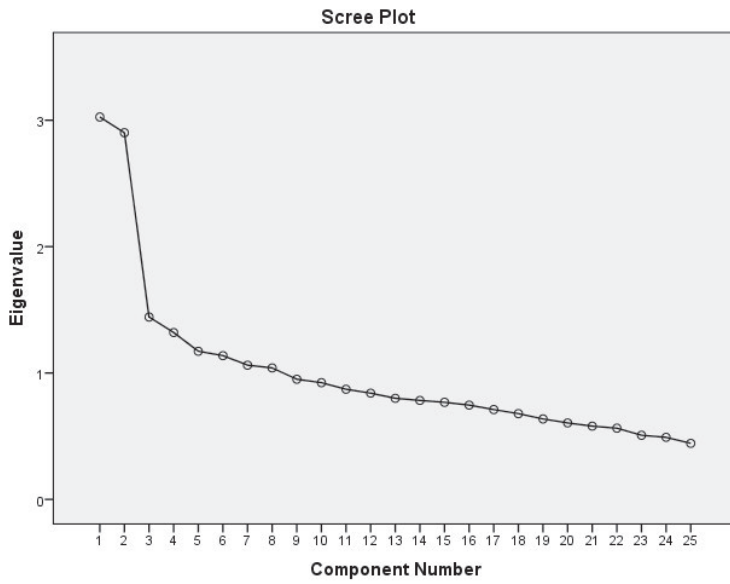
P3(R) The Western countries headed by the United States cannot truly allow China to rise to become a first-class power. .493

E10(R) The minimum wage should be prescribed by the state. .488

P6(R) The state should take measures to train and support sports athletes to win glory for the country in various international competitions. .484

P2(R) If the country's comprehensive strength permits, then China has the right to take any action to protect its own interests. .481

P5(R) Even if the market tends to use coal and oil as energy, the government should intervene to implement wind and solar. .481



Component Matrix^a

	Component							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
E4(r)	.543							
P7(r)	.528				-.358	-.445		
E2(r)	.515							-.379
P9(r)	.501							.428
P3(r)	.493			-.411				
E10(r)	.488			.337				
P6(r)	.484		-.388					
P2(r)	.481			-.337				
P5(r)	.481					.343		
E8(r)	.431	.307			-.312			
C3	-.372				.317		.315	
P10		.602						
C1		.587					-.323	
E6		.536						
E5		.524						
P4		.499		-.325			.348	
C2(r)		-.478				.396	.333	
E7		.411					.303	
C4		.408			-.347			-.376
E3(r)		-.339	.498					
P1(r)	.328		-.473	.326	.358			
E1(r)		-.391	.439					
P8				.504				.364
C5(r)	.390				-.337	-.419		.302
E9		.376					-.406	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 8 components extracted. (r) indicates reverse scoring

E8(R) Education should be as public as possible. .431

C3 The fundamental criterion for judging the value of a work of art is to see if it is loved by the people. -.372

P1(R) The state is obliged to provide foreign aid. .328

C5(R) Chinese traditional medicine has a higher concept of human health than modern mainstream medicine. .390

PCA 2

P10 Chinese citizens should be allowed to have foreign nationality at the same time. .602

C1 The Eight Diagrams (*Bagua*) in the Book of Changes (*Zhouyi*) can explain many things well. .587

E6 Private individuals should be able to own and trade land. .536

E5 Instead of letting state-owned enterprises lose money, it is better to resell them to capitalists. .524

P4 It is better to recruit students from independent examinations than the national unified examinations. .499

C2(R) Chinese characters do not need to be artificially simplified. -.478

E7 Foreign capital in China should enjoy the same treatment as national capital. .411

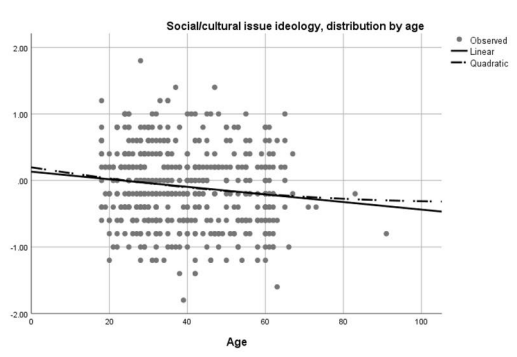
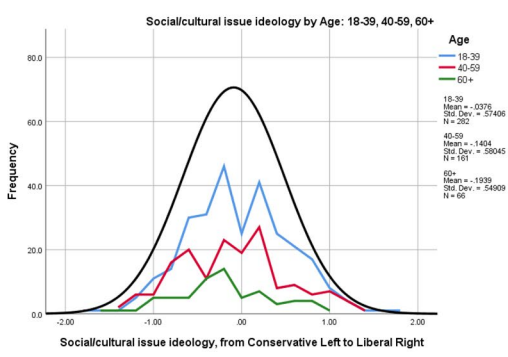
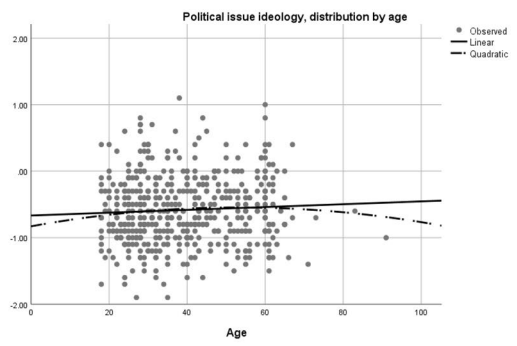
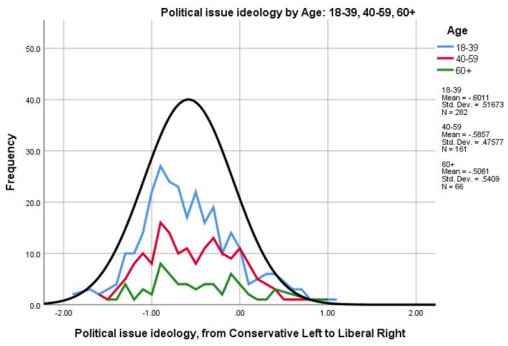
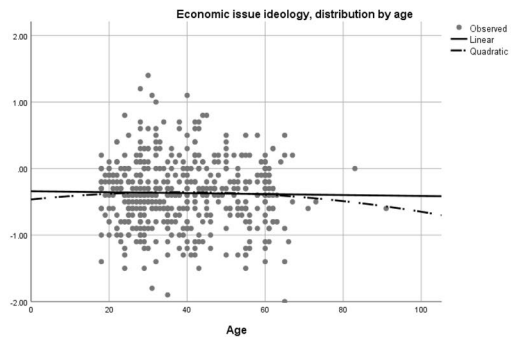
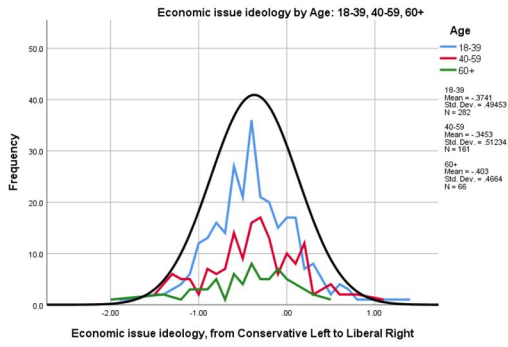
C4 If it is voluntary, I will recognize that my child has a relationship with the same sex. .408

E3(R) The process of capital accumulation is always accompanied by the harm to the interests of ordinary working people. -.339

E1(R) People who make money from working capital don't contribute to society more than people who make money from labor. -.391

E9 Attempts to control real-estate prices can undermine economic development. .376

Appendix B



Appendix C

Mean scores, *t* tests of mean differences between left-most half and right-most half of participants

	MFQ Care 0-5	MFQ Fairness 0-5	MFQ Loyalty 0-5	MFQ Authority 0-5	MFQ Purity 0-5	MFQ Prgrrssvsm -5-5	Learn Other Side 0 No/1 Yes	Undrstnd Other Side 0-4	Political Interest 1-10	News Media Use 1-10	"Equality" Political I Economic	Free Market 0 - Equality 1 + equality
Mean	3.60	4.11	3.78	3.59	3.63	.188	.70	3.36	6.20	6.03	.37	.33
SD	.544	.729	.756	.796	.799	.525	.457	1.00	2.41	2.30	.483	.471
left mean	3.62	4.18*	3.91***	3.70**	3.72**	.121**	.72	3.35	6.24	6.24*	.43**	.27**
right mean	3.58	4.02*	3.61***	3.46**	3.52**	.266**	.69	3.37	6.16	5.80*	.30**	.40**
<i>t</i> (507)	0.68	2.59	4.55	3.44	2.82	-3.14	-0.64	-0.22	0.39	2.17	3.12	-3.04

	Big 5 Extrvrn 1-5	Big 5 Agreeblnss 1-5	Big 5 Conscntsns 1-5	Big 5 Neurotcsn 1-5	Big 5 Opennss 1-5	CRT Correct SJT 1-9	CRT Intuitive 0-7	SSVS Power 0-8	SSVS Achievmnt 0-8	SSVS Hedonsm 0-8	SSVS Stimulatn 0-8	
Mean	3.02	3.49	3.66	2.85	3.44	5.95	3.68	2.41	7.09	7.80	6.74	6.56
SD	.848	.714	.800	.791	.814	1.33	2.24	1.85	2.01	1.71	1.97	2.07
left mean	3.02	3.58**	3.82***	2.86	3.47	6.15***	3.89*	2.23*	7.20	8.05***	6.60 [†]	6.38*
right mean	3.02	3.39**	3.48***	2.83	3.40	5.70***	3.43*	2.63*	6.95	7.51***	6.90 [†]	6.77*
<i>t</i> (507)	-0.07	3.13	4.94	0.42	0.96	3.83	2.33	-2.47	1.41	3.63	-1.72	-2.11

	SSVS Self- Dirctn 0-8	SSVS Univrslsm 0-8	SSVS Benevlnc 0-8	SSVS Tradition 0-8	SSVS Conformity 0-8	SSVS Security 0-8	SSVS Enhance- Transcend 0-8	SSVS Conserve- Openness 1-7	DOG- matism PNS 1-6	SDO 1-7	Cohesive 0 Tight 1 Loose	
Mean	7.73	7.60	8.04	7.60	7.40	8.50	-610	.824	3.66	4.27	3.05	.39
SD	1.63	1.81	1.59	1.70	1.82	1.56	1.66	1.61	.639	.624	.672	.489
left mean	7.90*	7.94***	8.39***	7.92***	7.58*	8.84***	-928***	1.189***	3.63	4.39***	2.93***	.38
right mean	7.54*	7.20***	7.63***	7.22***	7.19*	8.10***	-269***	.434***	3.69	4.14***	3.20***	.41
<i>t</i> (507)	2.49	4.64	5.43	4.74	2.43	5.52	-4.56	5.45	-1.05	4.63	-4.53	-0.67

	BS Receptivity 1-5	Anxious Authoritnsm 1-4	Avoidant Attachment 1-6	Ambiguity Attachment 0-5	Death NFC 1-6	Disgust Intolerance 1-6	Threat NFCS 1-5	Try New Anxiety 0-10	Domestic— Sensitivity 0-10	Power Brands 0-10	Foreign Foreign -10-10	Power Ladder 1-8	
Mean	3.67	2.57	4.06	3.20	3.73	4.29	4.09	2.43	8.97	8.39	8.02	.122	4.70
SD	.629	.479	.978	.968	.763	.671	.547	1.20	2.15	2.23	1.79	1.43	1.35
left mean	3.69	2.60 [†]	3.93**	3.05***	3.75	4.33	4.13 [†]	2.49	8.85	8.41	8.15 [†]	.297**	4.77
right mean	3.65	2.53 [†]	4.21**	3.37***	3.71	4.25	4.04 [†]	2.36	9.12	8.36	7.88 [†]	-.082**	4.60
mean													
<i>t</i> (507)	0.87	1.74	-3.26	-3.79	0.60	1.39	1.90	1.23	-1.40	0.25	1.71	3.06	1.41

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; [†] $p < .10$.

Appendix D

Summary of multiple regression analyses for categories of variables predicting ideology ($N = 508$)

	Demographics				Political/media questions				Moral foundations		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β		<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β		<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>
Age	-.000	.001	-.004	Learn other side: yes	-.006	.037	-.007	Care	.043	.031	.067
Female	-.010	.032	-.014	Understand other side	.013	.020	.037	Fairness	-.006	.028	-.013
Income	.007	.005	.076	Political interest	.002	.010	.013	Loyalty	-.072	.026	-.155**
Education	.001	.013	.004	News media use	-.028	.010	-.182**	Authority	-.051	.024	-.116*
Job status	-.001	.016	-.004	“Equality” means political	.144	.032	.197***	Purity	-.017	.026	-.038
				Free market means greater equality	.152	.032	.204***				
R^2 (Adj. R^2)	.006 (-.004)				.100 (.089)				.063 (.054)		
<i>F</i>	.642				9.292***				6.770***		

*** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$; † $p \leq .10$.

	Personality				Schwartz values				Epistemic traits		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β		<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β		<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>
Openness	-.011	.019	-.025	Security	-.029	.012	-.129*	Dogmatism	-.006	.026	-.010
Neuroticism	-.018	.020	-.039	Tradition	-.029	.012	-.138*	Need for structure	-.116	.030	-.205***
Agreeableness	-.044	.022	-.090*	Conformity	-.002	.010	-.011	Need for cognition	-.035	.021	-.076†
Extraversion	.019	.019	.046	Power	-.005	.009	-.026	Need for closure	-.014	.038	-.022
Conscientiousness	-.107	.021	-.243***	Achievement	-.020	.012	-.094	Cognitive reflection	-.015	.007	-.098*
				Hedonism	.006	.009	.034	BS receptivity	-.030	.025	-.054
				Stimulation	.028	.009	.166**	Int. of ambiguity	-.037	.027	-.071
				Self-direction	.003	.012	.015				
				Universalism	-.024	.011	-.124*				
				Benevolence	-.002	.015	-.010				
R^2 (Adj. R^2)	.082 (.073)				.135 (.118)				.087 (.074)		
<i>F</i>	8.947***				7.783***				6.793***		

*** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$; † $p \leq .10$.

	Existential traits				Relational traits				Consumer preferences		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β		<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β		<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>
System justification	-.057	.012	-.216***	Cohesiveness	.001	.031	.001	Try new brands	-.006	.026	-.010
Authoritarianism	-.091	.034	-.124**	Power ladder	-.024	.011	-.093*	Domestic—foreign brand preference	-.116	.030	-.205***
Death anxiety	-.006	.013	-.022	SDO	.075	.025	.142**				
Disgust sensitivity	.022	.009	.133*	Avoidant attach.	.048	.019	.131*				
Threat sensitivity	-.006	.008	-.037	Anxious attach.	.009	.018	.025				
<i>R</i> ² (Adj. <i>R</i> ²)	.083 (.074)				.061 (.051)				.042 (.038)		
<i>F</i>	9.159***				6.513***				10.955***		

****p* ≤ .001; ***p* ≤ .01; **p* ≤ .05; † *p* ≤ .10.

Summary of multiple regression analysis for all variables predicting ideology (*N* = 508)

Variable	Model 1		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>
Age	.000	.001	-.005
Female	-.033	.030	-.047
Income	.002	.004	.026
Education	.006	.012	.026
Job status	.011	.015	.034
Learn other side: yes	-.019	.035	-.025
Understand other side	-.015	.019	-.044
Political interest	.005	.010	.033
News media use	-.013	.009	-.086
“Equality” means political	.135	.030	.185***
Free market means greater equality	.125	.032	.167***
Care	.012	.031	.018
Fairness	.040	.029	.083
Loyalty	-.038	.025	-.079
Authority	-.025	.023	-.057
Purity	-.035	.025	-.079
Openness	-.026	.020	-.060
Neuroticism	-.003	.021	-.006
Agreeableness	-.020	.022	-.040
Extraversion	.026	.019	.063
Conscientiousness	-.059	.022	-.134**
Security	-.002	.024	-.007
Tradition	-.022	.012	-.104†
Conformity	.001	.010	.006
Power	-.001	.009	-.007
Achievement	-.003	.012	-.015
Hedonism	-.006	.009	-.031
Stimulation	.021	.010	.124*
Self-direction	-.004	.012	-.019
Universalism	-.017	.011	-.089
Benevolence	.008	.015	.035
Dogmatism	.008	.027	.014
Need for structure	-.055	.031	-.098†
Need for cognition	.019	.022	.041

Variable	Model 1		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>
Need for closure	-.002	.037	-.004
Cognitive reflection	-.008	.007	-.048
BS receptivity	-.002	.024	-.003
Int. of ambiguity	.020	.028	.039
System justification	-.053	.013	-.201***
Authoritarianism	-.075	.037	-.101*
Death anxiety	-.013	.013	-.045
Disgust sensitivity	.020	.008	.122*
Threat sensitivity	-.005	.008	-.030
Cohesiveness	.019	.029	.026
Power ladder	-.030	.011	-.115**
SDO	.009	.027	.018
Avoidant attach.	.006	.019	.017
Anxious attach.	.023	.019	.062
Try new brands	.009	.010	.048
Domestic—foreign brand preference	-.010	.011	-.041
R^2 (Adj. R^2)	.338 (.266)		
<i>F</i>	4.680***		

*** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$; † $p \leq .10$.