



Research Report

Political conservatism and variety-seeking

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Abstract

In this research, we document and explain a counterintuitive effect of political ideology on variety-seeking. Although political conservatives have a higher desire for control, which exerts a negative effect on variety-seeking, they also have a stronger motivation to follow social norms, which exerts a positive effect on variety-seeking. Three studies demonstrate that conservatism is positively related to variety-seeking due to social normative concerns and rule out an alternative explanation of heightened self-expressive motives among conservatives. This research provides preliminary evidence of how political ideology may explain differences in product choices.

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1. Introduction

Political ideology has been a popular and controversial topic in the social sciences. Since Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, and Nevitt (1950), researchers have studied the different psychological motives and tendencies underlying political ideologies (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009; Jost et al., 2007). Differences between liberals and conservatives are rooted in basic personality dispositions that reflect and reinforce differences in fundamental psychological needs and motives. In this paper, we examine whether, how and why a consumer's political ideology can affect his or her consumption choices. In particular, we investigate the impact of political ideology on variety-seeking.

We are interested in variety-seeking due to competing predictions about how it might be influenced by political ideology. Psychological accounts of differences between the left and the right have focused largely on open-mindedness. Liberals score higher on measures of openness, cognitive flexibility, and integrative complexity (Altemeyer, 1998; Tetlock, 1983), whereas

conservatives possess stronger needs for order, structure, closure, and decisiveness than liberals (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003; Kruglanski, 2004; McCrae, 1996). According to the uncertainty-threat model of ideology, sensitivity to uncertainty and fear is tied to a core dimension of political conservatism: resistance to change (Jost et al., 2007). Conservatives have a stronger desire to keep things under their control. Therefore, it seems intuitive that conservatism would be *negatively* related to variety-seeking in product choices.

On the other hand, because variety-seeking may be considered as a social norm (Kim & Drolet, 2003; Ratner & Kahn, 2002) and conservatives are motivated to adhere to social norms, they might actually seek more variety than liberals. In this paper, we investigate whether conservatism leads to more variety-seeking (due to normative concerns), less variety-seeking (due to desire for control), or exerts no effect (the two mechanisms have similar magnitudes and cancel each other out). We demonstrate that conservatives' motivation to follow social norms outweighs their desire for control, thereby causing consumers high in conservatism to seek *more* variety than those low in conservatism.

Despite the strong polarization of political ideology in the U.S. and in Europe (Bobbio, 1996; Jost, 2006), thus far, research has seldom examined how political ideology impacts decisions in

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people's daily lives. We know from qualitative research that political ideology can be a powerful driver of consumers' choices of products that have political implications (Crockett & Wallendorf, 2004; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007; Zhao & Belk, 2008). But how might political ideology bias our choices of products or brands that are not politically laden? To our knowledge, we are the first to test the causal relationship between political ideology and choice for non-political products. We also contribute to the literature on political ideology by demonstrating that conservatism increases variety-seeking, which seemingly contradicts previous research showing that conservatism is linked to needs for order, structure, and closure (Altemeyer, 1998) and lower openness to experience, novelty and change (McCrae, 1996). Finally, this paper may spur future research on political ideology by showing how the underlying motivations of conservatives explain their behavior.

2. The motivations underlying political conservatism

Rossiter (1968) defines political conservatism as an "opposition to disruptive change in the social, economic, legal, religious, political, or cultural order" (p. 291). Similarly, Wilson (1973) refers to conservatism as "the tendency to prefer safe, traditional and conventional forms of institutions and behaviour" (p. 4). Common to these definitions is the tendency to 1) avoid uncertainty and 2) accept and defend social norms. Supporting this notion, a meta-analysis by Jost et al. (2003) identified the core and peripheral characteristics of political conservatism, including resistance to change, avoidance of uncertainty, and desire for order, structure, and control. Conservatives prefer things that are stable, familiar and predictable (Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008; McCrae, 1996) due to psychological needs to manage uncertainty (Jost et al., 2007).

In addition, conservatives are more likely than liberals to adhere to widely accepted social norms (Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Jost et al., 2003). A social norm is a belief about what the majority of people are doing (known as a descriptive norm) or about what the majority of people are likely to approve of (known as an injunctive norm) (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990). These social norms are likely to guide people's behavior when they are focal or salient (Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2003; Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991; Cialdini et al., 1990). Previous research suggests that social norms are a more focal determinant of behavior for conservatives than for liberals. For example, conservatives score higher on conformity and obedience, whereas liberals score higher on rebelliousness and reactance (e.g., Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1988; Jost et al., 2008; Sidanius, 1993; Wilson, 1973). That is, conservatives are more likely than liberals to follow conventional forms of behavior (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Jost et al., 2008). In the next section, we explore how these motivations might predict differences in variety-seeking.

3. The relationship between conservatism and variety-seeking

As noted above, conservatives have a stronger desire to keep things under their control (Adorno et al., 1950; Jost et al., 2003, 2007; Nail, McGregor, Drinkwater, Steele, & Thompson, 2009).

This desire motivates them to prefer things that are stable, orderly and predictable (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Jost & Hunyady, 2005). For example, conservatives prefer to maintain the societal status quo by rationalizing existing social and economic inequality (Jost et al., 2004) and thinking favorably about their nation and its institutions (e.g., marriage, the nuclear family, government, industry, and capitalism; Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Conservatives' heightened motivation to feel in control drives them to actively seek control in the environment. Because relying on the same habitual products that one has always purchased is a means to decrease uncertainty and restore a sense of order and structure, conservatives' enhanced desire for control should lead consumers high in conservatism to consume *less* variety than those low in conservatism.

On the other hand, conservatives' desire to follow social norms might increase their variety-seeking. Previous research suggests that variety-seeking represents a social norm in individualistic cultures such as the U.S. and Europe (Drolet, 2002; Ratner & Kahn, 2002; Ratner, Kahn, & Kahneman, 1999). Consumers incorporate more variety into their repeated food consumption choices in public than in private, because they expect others to evaluate them more favorably when they follow this "consumption norm" (Ratner & Kahn, 2002). Accordingly, many individuals exhibit variety-seeking as a means of conforming to dominant social norms (Kim & Drolet, 2003; Ratner & Kahn, 2002). Thus, variety seeking can be viewed as both a descriptive norm of what is commonly done and an injunctive norm of what is commonly approved. Conservatives place high value on social norms (Altemeyer, 1998; Jost et al., 2003). They rationalize existing norms of conduct (Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Jost et al., 2003) and subscribe to the view that those norms are inevitable and necessary to reduce intergroup conflict (Sidanius, 1993). This reasoning suggests that conservatives will follow the norm of variety seeking by endorsing both what is commonly done and what is socially accepted.

In this research, we conceptualize a competitive mediation model. Based on Zhao, Lynch, and Chen's (2010) notion of competitive mediation, we propose that political conservatism affects variety-seeking via two simultaneous but opposing mechanisms. Specifically, we expect political conservatism to positively affect variety-seeking via the motivation to follow social norms, and to negatively affect variety-seeking via the desire for control. Which one of the two mechanisms is stronger is largely an empirical question. However, there are reasons to suspect that the motivation to follow social norms will exert a stronger effect than the desire for control on determining conservatives' choice patterns. Prior research shows that, while normative concerns are stable in conservatives, controllability concerns tend to be activated by situational factors (Jost et al., 2003; Jost et al., 2007). This phenomenon occurs because conservatives already hold system-justifying beliefs that provide them a way to handle uncertainty. For example, although in general conservatives are more likely than liberals to prefer things that are safe and familiar given the conservatives' stronger need to handle uncertainty, this difference is more pronounced following threats to the system (e.g., instability threats) or to the individual (e.g., existential threats) (Bonanno & Jost, 2006; Nail

et al., 2009). In contrast, conservatives' stronger normative orientation seems to be prevalent in their social interactions (Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1988; Jost et al., 2008; Wilson, 1973), perhaps because conservatives learn at a very young age from their authoritarian parents that social norms exist to be followed (Block & Block, 2006; Fraley, Griffin, Belsky, & Roisman, 2012). Therefore, when there is no threat present (as in our studies), we anticipate that conservatives' motivation to follow social norms will outweigh their desire for control, resulting in a positive net effect of conservatism on variety-seeking.

We designed three studies to test and explain the effect of political ideology on variety-seeking. Study 1 examines the competing mechanisms of the effects of conservatism on variety-seeking. In this study, we show that the positive effect of conservatism on variety-seeking (through the motivation to follow social norms) outweighs its negative effect (through the desire for control). Study 2 replicates the effect of conservatism on variety-seeking via adherence to social norms, and addresses the alternative explanation of self-expressive motives. Study 3 establishes a causal relationship between conservatism and variety-seeking by manipulating political ideology instead of measuring it.

4. Study 1: the competing effects of conservatism on variety-seeking

Study 1 aims to examine the effect of conservatism on variety-seeking via two mediators: the motivation to follow social norms and the desire for control. Conservatism was measured using an updated version of Altemeyer and Hunsberger's (1992) Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scale, which addresses several core and peripheral aspects of conservatism including resistance to change, commitment to tradition, authority, and social convention against threats (Jost et al., 2003). This scale has been criticized for using extreme wording on certain items (Zakrisson, 2005). Therefore, we omitted five potentially controversial items about adherence to the Bible and opinions about the worth of homosexuals and women. The final scale contained of 19 items such as "Laws have to be strictly enforced if we are going to preserve our way of life"; and "Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn". Participants indicated the extent to which they agree with each statement (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Higher scores reflect more conservative ideology.

We measured the motivation to follow social norms using a reverse-coded version of the "desire to not always follow rules scale" (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977; Tepper & Hoyle, 1996), thereby measuring the desire to follow rules. The desire to not always follow rules scale, a subscale of the need-for-uniqueness scale, has been validated in previous research as a measure of counterconformity (Lynn & Harris, 1997; Tepper & Hoyle, 1996; Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001; Zweigenhaft, 1981). This scale reflects "a pronounced tendency to break rank" (Tepper & Hoyle, 1996, p. 487). It correlates negatively with concern about the way one presents him/herself in public and with motivation to fit in (Tepper & Hoyle, 1996). We omitted three items due to lack of face validity and potential confounds. For example, one item,

which asked respondents whether they would prefer an unusual or an ordinary death, could unintentionally activate mortality salience. The final scale contained eight items such as "I always try to follow rules" and "It is better to break the rules than to always conform to an impersonal society" (reverse-scored) (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Higher [lower] scores reflect a stronger [weaker] motivation to follow social norms. Thus, this scale measured participants' motivation to follow social norms.

We measured desire for control using the desirability of control scale (Burger & Cooper, 1979), which reflects the tendency to feel in control of the environment. People who score high on this scale are more motivated to acquire and to maintain control of the environment, to make one's own decisions and to be in charge of one's activities (Burger & Cooper, 1979). The scale contained 20 items such as "I prefer a job where I have a lot of control over what I do and when I do it" (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Higher [lower] scores reflect a stronger [weaker] desire for control.

We predict a positive indirect effect of conservatism on variety-seeking through the motivation to follow social norms scale and a negative indirect effect via the desirability of control scale (Zhao et al., 2010). In addition, we predict that the positive indirect effect will be stronger than the negative, as there is more variance in conservatives' desire for control than in their motivation to follow the norms. Therefore, we predict a net positive effect of conservatism on variety-seeking.

4.1. Method

One hundred ninety-two undergraduates at a U.S. university participated in the study in exchange for course credit. Participants first completed the RWA scale ($\alpha = .74$; $M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.68$). Next, participants completed an allegedly unrelated study in which they imagined they were doing their weekly grocery shopping at a nearby grocery store. This procedure is similar to one conducted by Menon and Kahn (1995, experiment 2). On each of four sequential shopping occasions, participants chose the brand of snack chips (among four brands: Herrs Potato Chips, Fritos Corn Chips, Cheetos Cheese Curls, and Doritos Tortilla Chips) that they wanted to purchase. The number of different choices participants made in this sequential choice task, ranging from 1 (same choice made across all weeks; A–A–A–A) to 4 (each week a different choice; A–B–C–D), constituted our measure of variety-seeking. After the choice task, participants completed the desirability of control scale ($\alpha = .85$; $M = 5.03$, $SD = 0.67$) and the desire for following rules scale ($\alpha = .60$; $M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.76$).

4.2. Results and discussion

Following Aiken and West (1991), we mean-centered the scales to conduct multiple regression analyses of variety-seeking. We tested the indirect effects of conservatism on variety-seeking via the motivation to follow social norms and the desire for control, following Zhao et al.'s (2010) recommendations. We used the Hayes process script to estimate these indirect effects

(Hayes, 2012). Using 5000 bootstrap samples, this analysis revealed a positive indirect effect of conservatism on variety-seeking through the desire for following rules (95% CI: .008 to .283) and a negative indirect effect through desire for control (95% CI: $-.118$ to $-.006$).

Conservatism positively predicted variety-seeking ($B = .14$, $t(190) = 1.99$, $p < .05$). Conservatism also positively predicted the motivation to follow social norms ($B = .51$, $t(189) = 8.08$, $p < .01$) and the desire for control ($B = .18$, $t(189) = 2.22$, $p < .05$). The motivation to follow social norms and desire for control were marginally negatively related ($B = -.14$, $t(189) = -1.80$, $p = .07$).

Consistent with our dual-mediation framework, the positive effect of conservatism on variety-seeking became non-significant when motivation to follow social norms was added to the model ($B = .06$, $t(189) = 0.74$, $p = .46$), while the motivation to follow social norms on variety-seeking was significant ($B = .16$, $t(189) = 1.99$, $p < .05$), supporting an “indirect-only mediation” in which the indirect pathway (from conservatism to the motivation to follow social norms to variety-seeking) fully mediated the effect of conservatism on variety-seeking.

In contrast, the positive effect of conservatism on variety-seeking remained significant when desire for control was added ($B = .16$, $t(189) = 2.23$, $p < .05$), while the effect of desire for control on variety-seeking was also significant ($B = -.15$, $t(189) = -2.12$, $p < .05$), indicating a “competitive mediation” in which the indirect pathway (from conservatism to the desire for control to variety-seeking) was contrary to the direct effect of conservatism on variety-seeking.

These results support our theoretical framework: the motivation to follow social norms and the desire for control mediate the effect of conservatism on variety-seeking in opposite directions, with the positive effect of social norms outweighing the negative effect of desire for control. See the mediating paths in Fig. 1.

5. Study 2: The alternative explanation of self-expression

The results of study 1 provide preliminary evidence that adherence to social norms drives conservatives to seek a high

level of variety. However, it is possible that a desire for self-expression might also explain this pattern of results. In particular, previous research indicates that self-expression predicts variety-seeking in the U.S. and not in Korea (Kim & Drolet, 2003), because in Western countries, self-expression is an important value. The fact that many people seek variety is indicative of variety-seeking as a social norm. Therefore, perhaps conservatives seek more variety because they have a stronger desire for self-expression than liberals. We address this possibility in study 2.

Self-expression is defined as the assertion of one's inner thoughts, feelings, values, or preferences to others (as opposed to privately thinking about them) (Kim & Sherman, 2007). Consumers often use their product or brand choices to express their identities to others (e.g., Chernev, Hamilton, & Gal, 2011). It is important to note that self-expression is not the same as uniqueness-seeking: a desire for self-expression might manifest itself as either uniqueness-seeking or conformity-seeking, depending on the individual's personal preferences and values. In contrast, other-expression (rather than self-expression) is the act of conforming to a social norm (Maimaran & Simonson, 2011). We propose that the desires for self-expression and other-expression (i.e., conformity-seeking) are independent, and as such may exert independent influences on variety-seeking. In other words, an individual might simultaneously exhibit strong needs for both self-expression and other-expression. Supporting this notion, self-expression can take the form of either standing out from others or fitting in with others (Berger & Heath, 2007; Chan, Berger, & Van Boven, 2012). Also supporting this idea, Sela and Maimaran (2012) have demonstrated that a desire for self-expression can sometimes lead to *lower* variety-seeking, particularly when the options are socially desirable and individuals want to signal strong, identity-relevant preferences.

A synthesis of these findings suggests that the motivation to follow social norms (other-expression) and the motivation for self-expression might exert independent influences on variety-seeking, with no interaction. Therefore, the goal of study 2 is to test the differential effects of conservatism and self-expression on variety-seeking. Consumers' need for self-expression is

STUDY 1 RESULTS: THE COMPETITIVE MEDIATION MODEL

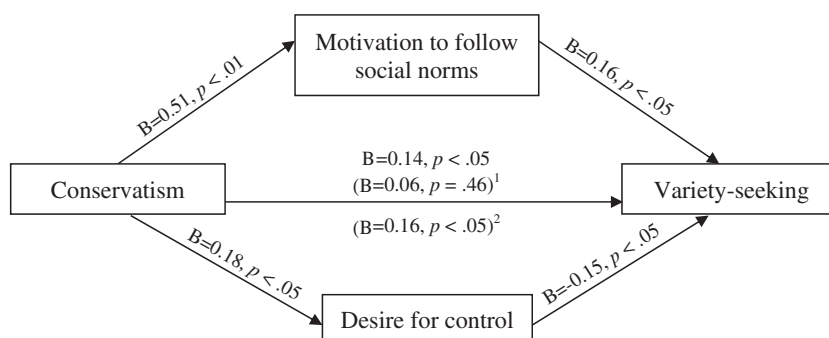


Fig. 1. Study 1 results: The competitive mediation model. ¹Effect of conservatism on variety-seeking controlling for the motivation to follow social norms. ²Effect of conservatism on variety-seeking controlling for the desire for control scale.

finite and can be satiated (Chernev et al., 2011; Kim & Drolet, 2003), thereby reducing its impact on subsequent choices. Hence, we manipulated self-expression via a choice listing task (Kim & Drolet, 2003, study 3), in which half of participants were asked to freely recall the choices they made the day before the study. If conservatives seek variety due to self-expression, the results of study 1 should be reduced (or eliminated) when self-expressive motives are satiated. On the other hand, if the effect of ideology on variety-seeking is independent of self-expression, these predictors will not interact but exert separate main effects on variety-seeking.

5.1. Method

One hundred eleven undergraduates at a Western-European university completed the study in exchange for course credit. They first completed a short version of the RWA scale ($\alpha = .77$; $M = 4.74$, $SD = 0.90$). Next, they were randomly assigned to either the choice-listing (satiated self-expression) condition or the no-choice-listing (non-satiated self-expression) condition as in Kim and Drolet (2003, study 3). Those in the satiated self-expression condition listed all of the choices they could recall making the day before the study. Those in the non-satiated self-expression were not asked to recall any choices. Based on the findings of Kim and Drolet (2003), we expect participants who listed their choices to feel a lower need for self-expression than those who did not list their choices.

Then, participants completed the sequential choice task as in study 1. This constituted our first measure of variety-seeking. Next, they selected three candy bars from five options (Milky Way, Snickers, Mars, Twix and Bounty) as a token of appreciation for their participation. The number of different choices participants made in this simultaneous choice task, from 1 (only one type of candy bar selected) to 3 (three different types of candy bars selected), constituted our second measure of variety-seeking. The correlation between the two measures was significant ($r = .24$, $p = .01$). After the choice tasks, participants completed the measure of motivation to follow social norms, operationalized with the desire for following rules scale as in study 1 ($\alpha = .67$; $M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.87$).

5.2. Results and discussion

Following Aiken and West (1991), we mean-centered the scales and contrast-coded the self-expression conditions (satiated = -1 , non-satiated = 1) to conduct multiple regression analyses of variety-seeking. We conducted our analysis on the average number of different choices participants made in the first and in the second choice tasks. First, we added conservatism as a continuous variable, self-expression as a dichotomous variable and their interaction as predictors of variety-seeking. This analysis revealed a main effect of conservatism ($B = 0.25$, $t(107) = 2.76$, $p < .01$), a main effect of self-expression satiation ($B = 0.18$, $t(107) = 1.92$, $p = .058$), but no interaction ($B = 0.09$, $t(107) = 1.08$, $p = .28$). As predicted, conservatism exerted a positive effect on variety-seeking. In addition, participants in the satiated self-expression condition selected less variety ($M = 2.24$) than those in the

non-satiated condition ($M = 2.47$). The choice listing task partially satiated the need for variety-seeking, but its effect was not related to the effect of conservatism on variety-seeking. Self-expression and conservatism exerted independent effects on variety-seeking.

Next, we added the motivation to follow social norms to the model. The motivation to follow social norms exerted a significant effect on variety-seeking ($B = 0.22$, $t(106) = 2.20$, $p = .03$), while the effect of conservatism decreased to non-significant ($B = 0.15$, $t(106) = 1.42$, $p = .16$). Importantly, the effect of self-expression remained significant ($B = 0.19$, $t(106) = 2.05$, $p = .04$).

As predicted, conservatism was strongly related to the motivation to follow social norms ($B = 0.47$, $t(109) = 5.61$, $p < .01$). In order to examine the indirect effect of political ideology on variety-seeking through the motivation to follow social norms, we followed the steps proposed by Zhao et al. (2010) and used the Preacher–Hayes indirect script to estimate this effect (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Using 5000 bootstrap samples, this analysis provided evidence for “indirect-only mediation”, meaning that the indirect pathway (from conservatism to the motivation to follow social norms to variety-seeking) was significant (95% CI: .006 to .201).

These results support our predictions. Conservatism exerts a positive effect on variety-seeking that is independent from the effect of self-expression on variety-seeking. In addition, only the effect of conservatism, and not the effect of self-expression, on variety-seeking is mediated by the motivation to follow social norms. In study 3, we aim to test the causal effect of conservatism on variety-seeking by manipulating political ideology.

6. Study 3: the causal effect of conservatism on variety-seeking

One potential limitation of our first two studies is that we measured participants' political ideology, which might correlate with measures such as socioeconomic status, gender, education level, and religious orientation. Thus, study 3 manipulates political ideology through a priming procedure consisting of a scrambled sentences task (Srull & Wyer, 1979). Recent research shows that such identities can be temporarily activated (Morris, Carranza, & Fox, 2008). We first pre-tested the manipulation and then conducted the main study with the same procedure.

6.1. Method

Ninety-one undergraduates (in the pre-test) and ninety-four undergraduates (in the main study) from a Western-European university were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions (high conservatism, low conservatism, or neutral). Similarly to prior research (Chartrand & Bargh, 1996; Hart & Albarracín, 2009), participants saw 12 different groups of five words on separate pages. Their task was to form a grammatically correct sentence using four of the five words. In the low conservatism condition, these groups contained words related to liberalism (e.g., free, left-wing, liberal). In the high conservatism condition, the words were related to conservatism (e.g., traditional, conventional, conservative). In the control condition, the words

were non-ideological. Next, in the pre-test, participants reported their political ideology (from 1 = very liberal to 9 = very conservative). In the main study, they instead completed the sequential choice task used in previous studies.

6.2. Results and discussion

6.2.1. Pre-test

One participant with a studentized deleted residual significantly different from the other observations ($p < .01$) and was removed from the analysis (McClelland, 2000). An ANOVA on self-reported political ideology with primed ideology (liberal vs. conservative vs. neutral) as a between-participants factor revealed a significant effect ($F(2, 87) = 8.21, p < .01$). Participants receiving the high conservatism prime scored higher on conservatism ($M = 5.27$) than those receiving the neutral prime ($M = 4.50; F(1, 87) = 3.91, p = .05$), who scored higher on conservatism than those receiving the low conservatism prime ($M = 3.64; F(1, 87) = 4.72, p < .05$).

6.2.2. Main study

An ANOVA on the number of different choices with primed ideology (low conservatism vs. high conservatism vs. neutral) as a between-participants factor revealed a significant effect ($F(2, 91) = 4.61, p < .05$). Planned comparisons confirmed that participants receiving the high conservatism prime selected more variety ($M = 2.63$) than those receiving the neutral prime ($M = 1.83; F(1, 91) = 9.17, p < .01$) and those receiving the low conservatism prime ($M = 2.14; F(1, 91) = 3.81, p = .05$). The difference between those receiving the low conservatism prime and those receiving the neutral prime was nonsignificant ($F(1, 91) = 1.89, p = .17$). These results support our prediction that conservatism exerts a positive causal effect on variety-seeking.

7. General discussion

In this article we investigated the effect of political ideology on variety-seeking. Across three studies, we provided evidence that the positive indirect effect of conservatism on variety seeking by motivation to follow social norms overrides the negative indirect effect by the desire for control, thereby leading consumers high in conservatism to seek more variety than those low in conservatism.

7.1. Theoretical contribution

The notion that differences in the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals are linked to their political ideologies has intrigued a number of researchers. Consistent with this idea, previous research has demonstrated that cognitive styles and psychological characteristics often correlate with political ideology (Jost et al., 2003). However, prior research has paid scant attention to the behavioral consequences of political ideology. Even less attention has been paid to the effect of ideology on behaviors that are devoid of political content (see Amodio, Jost, Master, & Yee, 2007 for an exception). Our findings contribute to

this literature by offering a preliminary snapshot of how a consumer's political ideology may shape product choices.

7.2. Managerial contribution

Our findings may also offer some practical implications. If a marketing manager wants consumers who do not engage in variety-seeking among different brands (i.e., brand loyal), s/he might target neighborhoods that are politically liberal ("blue states") or advertise in liberal media (e.g., *The New York Times*, *The Huffington Post*, or *National Public Radio*). On the other hand, if a marketing manager wants consumers who are open to variety when introducing a new product, for example, s/he might target neighborhoods that are politically conservative ("red states"), advertise in conservative media (e.g., *Fox News*, *The Wall Street Journal*, or *The Drudge Report*), and/or place an advertisement near a conservative-leaning news article or editorial.

7.3. Future research

We have intentionally chosen to narrow our focus to the effects of conservatism on variety-seeking, due to competing predictions and potentially counterintuitive findings. However, we encourage consumer researchers to identify other important differences in consumption patterns between liberals and conservatives. As an extension of our findings, it is also likely that conservatives, due to a desire to follow social norms, will be more likely to choose products that help them to fit in with their social groups over products that will cause them to stand out from others (Chan et al., 2012). For example, conservatives are likely to be more susceptible than liberals to social proof appeals in marketing messages (Goldstein, Cialdini, & Griskevicius, 2008).

Consumers who are high (vs. low) in conservatism are also more comfortable with the notion of economic inequality (Napier & Jost, 2008). As a consequence, conservatives may be more prone to engage in materialism and conspicuous consumption, or to consume as a way to gain social status. In addition, conservatism is related to religious orthodoxy (Jost et al., 2003), and religiosity is related to decreased loyalty to brands (Shachar, Erdem, Cutright, & Fitzsimons, 2010). Therefore, conservatives may be less loyal to brands due to holding stronger religious beliefs. The pursuit of these research questions will foster a better understanding of the various ways through which consumption patterns serve as manifestations of ideological motivations.

In addition, we recommend further examination of the relationship between self-expression and other-expression among conservatives and liberals, as well as more precise definitions of variety-seeking. Please recall our assertion above that self-expression and uniqueness-seeking are independent constructs. Our findings suggest that consumers high in conservatism are more likely to choose variety in terms of selecting different products from their last purchase (as a way to show that they follow the norm of variety, e.g. Ratner & Kahn, 2002). However, consumers low in conservatism may be more likely to choose variety in terms of selecting different products from the purchases

of other customers (as a way to show that they are unique; e.g. Ariely & Levav, 2000). We recommend that future research identify the differing motivations for these different types of variety-seeking.

Future research may also extend our findings by examining moderators of the effect of conservatism on variety-seeking. In particular, what situations cause conservatives to weight the desire for control more heavily than the motivation to follow social norms? When conservatives experience a high level of threat or uncertainty, they may attempt to restore feelings of control (Heine, Proulx, & Vohs, 2006), thereby decreasing variety-seeking and limiting choice to things that are familiar. Such a threat might take the form of a power threat, (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008), system threat (Cutright, Wu, Banfield, Kay, & Fitzsimons, 2011), or mortality salience (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986). Alternatively, unfamiliar shopping environments and/or unexpected events during the in-store experience could reduce or reverse the positive effect of conservatism on variety-seeking, due to a heightened need to manage uncertainty.

Another interesting avenue for future research is the effect of political ideology on product disposition. For example, might conservatives strategically dispose of some of their possessions in order to maximize the assortment in their set of collected products (because of the motivation to follow social norms) or the reverse (because of desire for control)? It is possible that conservatives, in their private lives, are less influenced by social normative concerns and/or more influenced by psychological needs for order, closure and control.

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