Cognitive Style and Political Ideology

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This study employed a systematic coding technique to assess the integrative complexity of policy statements of senators who, on the basis of their 1975 and 1976 voting records, had been classified as liberal, moderate, or conservative. Two hypotheses were tested. One hypothesis, derived from research on the authoritarian personality and conservatism, was that senators who consistently voted for conservative ideological causes would be more prone to rely on simple (good vs. bad) evaluative rules in interpreting policy issues than liberal or moderate senators. The second hypothesis was that senators who voted in ideologically consistent patterns (regardless of the liberal or conservative content of the ideology) would be more prone to rely on simple evaluative rules in interpreting issues than senators who voted in less consistent patterns (moderates). The results indicated that conservative senators made significantly less complex statements than their liberal or moderate colleagues. This finding remained significant after controlling for several other variables, including political party affiliation, education, years of service in the Senate, and age. Alternative interpretations of the data are examined, and theoretical issues in need of further clarification are discussed.

Researchers have devoted considerable effort to exploring the relationship between political ideology and more general individual differences in personality structure and functioning (Knutson, 1973; Levinson, 1968). One important focus of this work has been on cognitive style constructs such as dogmatism (Rokeach, 1956), tolerance of ambiguity (Sidanius, 1978), flexibility-rigidity (Taylor, 1960), and conceptual or integrative complexity (Russell & Sandilands, 1973; Scott, Osgood, & Peterson, 1979; Tetlock, 1981b). The recurring question has been: Do persons who differ in cognitive style (i.e., their characteristic ways of conceptually organizing their environments) also differ in their receptiveness to particular political movements or ideologies?

Perhaps the most influential hypothesis linking cognitive style and political ideology derives from the classic work on the authoritarian personality (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). Authoritarian personality theory traces a cluster of beliefs about the world—including anti-Semitism, ethnocentrism, pessimism and cynicism about human nature, political-economic conservatism and antidemocratic views—to deep-rooted psychodynamic conflicts that, in turn, can be traced to the early parent-child relationship. The theory posits that authoritarian individuals are likely to adopt rigid, dichotomous and value-laden interpretations of events. More recently, Wilson and his colleagues have gathered considerable evidence to support a theoretical analysis of "conservatism" with similar implications. According to Wilson (1973, p. 261), conservative attitudes serve a defensive function. They arise as a means of simplifying, ordering, controlling, and rendering more secure both the external world . . . and the internal world.
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... Order is imposed upon inner needs and feelings by subjugating them to rigid and simplistic external codes of conduct. (cf. Feather, 1979)

These positions lead us to expect greater intolerance of uncertainty and greater receptiveness to simple ideological formulas or solutions among individuals who identify with conservative (right-wing) causes than with radical (left-wing) or moderate causes.

However, critics have noted that the above argument is insensitive to authoritarianism of the left (Rokeach, 1956). An alternative view, which will be called the ideological hypothesis, asserts that advocates of the ideological left and right are much more similar to each other in cognitive style than they are to individuals at the center of the political spectrum (cf. Rokeach, 1956; Shils, 1958; Taylor, 1960). True believers (regardless of their specific cause) are more dogmatic, more intolerant of ambiguity and inconsistency, and more conceptually simple than are moderates who have resisted the absolutist doctrines of the left or right. In the words of Shils (1958, p. 451), ideological individuals assume that "politics should be conducted from the standpoint of a coherent comprehensive set of beliefs that must override every other consideration." Ideologues are hostile toward political opponents, exhibit dichotomous, "black-white" thinking, and have little patience for the compromise, bargaining, and incrementalism characteristic of pluralist democracies.

The vast majority of research on this topic has involved the mass administration of political attitude and personality scales to survey respondents and college undergraduates. Although there are some contradictory findings, Stone (1980) has argued in a recent review that the preponderance of evidence is consistent with the authoritarian personality hypothesis and inconsistent with the ideologue hypothesis (cf. Barker, 1963; McClosky, 1967; Neuman, 1981; Sidanis, 1978; Wilson, 1973). He noted that, despite attempts to develop ideology-free psychological measures, right-wing respondents generally appear more dogmatic, intolerant of ambiguity, and cognitively undifferentiated than left-wing or moderate respondents.

How generalizable are such findings to high-level policy makers? There are good reasons for caution. Political elites differ in a variety of respects from the general public. As one moves closer to the center stage of the political arena, there are sharp increases in both the amount of information individuals possess on key issues and in the importance of abstract ideological principles for organizing the opinions individuals express (cf. Converse, 1964). There are also numerous personality differences between political elites and the general public (Constantini & Craik, 1980). Political attitudes may serve different motivational functions for politically active and inactive populations (Knutson, 1973).

The present study tests the authoritarian personality and ideologue hypotheses in an unusual sample of politically elite individuals: members of the United States Senate. Because it was obviously not practical to rely on conventional survey or personality assessment techniques, we used a content analytic procedure that permitted assessment of cognitive style at a distance (cf. Hermann, 1977; Tetlock, 1981b; Winter & Stewart, 1977). Specifically, our study employed the integrative complexity coding system, a technique originally developed for scoring responses to a semiprojective test designed to assess individual differences in integrative complexity (Schroder, 1971; Schroder, Driver, & Streufert, 1967). More recent work has demonstrated the usefulness of the coding system for testing hypotheses in natural settings by analyzing such archival documents as letters, diaries, speeches, and diplomatic communications (Levi & Tetlock, 1980; Porter & Suedfeld, 1981; Suedfeld & Tetlock, 1977; Tetlock, 1979, 1981a, 1981b).1

The major focus of integrative complexity theory and the associated coding system is the cognitive differentiation and integration of information. Differentiation refers to the variety of aspects of an issue that a person recognizes. For instance, an undifferentiated politician might rely on a simple evaluative rule to categorize policy options: the "good, socialist" policies and the "bad, capitalist..."

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1 There is an interesting methodological similarity between these applications of the integrative complexity coding system and applications of the coding systems for need achievement and need power (McClelland, 1961; Winter, 1973).
ones (or vice versa). A more differentiated politician would recognize that policies have multiple, sometimes contradictory, effects that cannot be easily classified on a single evaluative dimension: effects on diverse political constituencies, various parameters of the economy, defense posture, and the strategies of one’s allies and opponents. Integration refers to the development of complex connections among differentiated characteristics. The complexity of integration depends on whether the individual perceives the differentiated characteristics as operating in isolation (low integration), in simple patterns (moderate integration), or in multiple, complex patterns (high integration). Previous research indicates the existence of both systematic individual differences in integrative complexity (Schroeder et al., 1967; Tetlock, 1981b) and situational determinants of integrative complexity such as stress and groupthink (Porter & Suedfeld, 1981; Suedfeld & Tetlock, 1977; Tetlock, 1979).

One feature of the integrative complexity construct deserves special note: its emphasis on structure rather than content (cf. Schroeder, 1971; Streufert & Streufert, 1978). There is no built-in bias for or against any particular political philosophy. One can advance simple or complex arguments for any of a variety of viewpoints; for example, in favor of or in opposition to nationalization of key industries, abortion, higher military spending, capital punishment, or free trade. A person’s level of integrative complexity is determined not by the specific beliefs he or she endorses, but by the conceptual structure underlying the positions taken.

The study reported here uses the integrative complexity coding system to analyze Congressional policy statements of senators who, on the basis of their voting records in 1975 and 1976, had been classified as liberal, moderate, or conservative.2 If the hypothesis derived from work on the authoritarian personality and conservatism is correct, senators with consistently conservative voting records will advance significantly less complex policy statements than their liberal or moderate colleagues. If the ideologue hypothesis is correct, senators with consistently liberal or conservative voting records will be significantly less complex than their moderate colleagues.

In addition to testing the above hypotheses, this study explored a number of other issues. For instance, it attempted to identify and control for background variables that explain individual differences in ideology and integrative complexity. How well can one predict a senator’s ideological position or integrative complexity from the senator’s political party affiliation, education, age, or length of service in the Senate? Is there a significant relationship between ideology and integrative complexity when one controls for these variables? The information derived from these preliminary analyses may be useful in developing causal models of the cognitive style—ideology relationship that can be tested in future work. This study also explores the stability of individual differences among senators in integrative complexity. How well can one predict a senator’s integrative complexity from one year to the next? How internally consistent are the integrative complexity scores of senators’ policy statements in a given year?

Method

Records of congressional speeches given by senators during 1975 and 1976 provided the data. Ratings of 1975 and 1976 senatorial voting records by Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), a liberal, political organization, provided the initial basis for classifying senators as liberal, moderate, or conservative. (ADA ratings of senators in the 2 years were highly correlated, r[43] = .97.) Senators who received a mean ADA rating less than 20 were classified as conservative; senators who received a mean ADA rating of greater than 80 were classified as liberal and senators who received a mean ADA rating between 25 and 75 were classified as moderate. Fifteen liberal, 15 moderate, and 15 conservative senators were randomly selected for inclusion in the study. To ensure that the ADA ratings reflected a broad political consensus, we calculated correlations between ADA ratings and those of Americans for Constitutional Action (ACA), an influential conservative political organization. These correlations were extremely high (r = −.93 in 1975; r =

2 Some political scientists (e.g., Clausen, 1973) might challenge the usefulness of broad ideological labels such as liberal or conservative on the ground that congressional coalitions change from one policy domain to another (civil liberties, social welfare, agricultural policy, government management/macro-economic issues, and international involvement). However, recent work indicates a high degree of ideological consistency in senatorial voting patterns across these policy domains in the 1970s (Schneider, 1979). Being liberal or conservative in one issue area corresponds very closely with being liberal or conservative in other areas.
Since a positive rating by one group almost guarantees a negative rating by the other group, we decided simply to use ADA ratings in the subsequent data analyses.

A total of 20 paragraph-sized statements were sampled from the speeches of each senator: 10 from 1975 and 10 from 1976. These statements ranged in length from approximately 30 to 150 words. The sampling procedure involved: (a) scanning the Congressional Record and locating as many speeches as possible for each senator (excluding textual materials such as editorials or other individuals' speeches submitted for the record); (b) dividing the material collected into paragraph-sized scoring units; and (c) randomly selecting units to be scored.

There were no significant differences in the length of the statements selected for liberal, moderate, and conservative senators. There were low, positive correlations between the lengths of statements and integrative complexity scores ($r = .09$ in 1975, and $r = .12$ in 1976).

**Integrative Complexity Coding**

All material was coded for integrative complexity on a 7-point scale (see Schroder et al., 1967, Appendix I). As mentioned earlier, the scale defines integrative complexity in terms of both differentiation and integration. Scores of 1 reflect low differentiation and low integration. For example:

Abortion is a basic right that should be available to all women. To limit a woman's access to an abortion is an intolerable infringement on her civil liberties. Such an infringement must not be tolerated. To do so would be to threaten the separation of Church and State so fundamental to the American way of life.

Scores of 3 reflect moderate to high differentiation, but low integration. The individual recognizes alternative points of view, but does not perceive relationships between them.

Many see abortion as a basic civil liberty that should be available to any woman who chooses to exercise this right. Others, however, see abortion as infanticide.

Scores of 5 reflect moderate to high differentiation and moderate integration. The individual develops an explicit comparison rule to contrast alternative perspectives on the issue.

Some view abortion as a civil liberties issue—that of the woman's right to choose; others view abortion as no more justifiable than murder. Which perspective one takes depends on when one views the organism developing within the mother as a human being.

Scores of 7 reflect high differentiation and high integration. The individual uses complex rules to compare and contrast alternative perspectives.

Some view abortion as a civil liberties issue; others see abortion as tantamount to murder. One's view of abortion depends on a complicated mixture of legal, moral, philosophical and, perhaps, scientific judgments. Is there a constitutional right to abortion? What criteria should be used to determine when human life begins? Who possesses the authority to resolve these issues?

Scores of 2, 4, and 6 represent transition points between levels.

Scoring for integrative complexity was performed by the author and by trained coders who were unaware of the hypotheses and, to the extent possible, the sources of the material (mean interrater agreement, $r = .89$). Disagreements were later resolved by discussion among coders.

**Additional Data**

Background information was also collected on each senator, including political party, education, age, and length of service in the Senate. Political party (Republican, Democrat) was coded as a dichotomous variable that equaled 0 if the senator was a Republican and 1 if the senator was a Democrat. Education was coded on a 3-point scale (0 = high school graduate; 1 = college graduate; 2 = postgraduate degree). Age and length of service in the Senate were simply coded in number of years.

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2 Both Americans for Democratic Action and Americans for Constitutional Action rate legislators on a wide range of domestic and foreign policy issues. Major issues in 1975 and 1976 included a national no-fault auto insurance system, the B-1 bomber, cutting the defense budget, vertical divestiture of major oil and gas companies, auto pollution standards, arms sales to Chile, federal funds for abortion, and support for a nuclear breeder reactor.

4 One might question whether this procedure resulted in our assessing the integrative complexity of the senators or their key staff. Several factors mitigate the force of this objection. First, senators do sometimes write their own speeches. Second, even when staff have written the initial drafts of speeches, senators typically revise these drafts until they feel comfortable with the style and substance of the statement. Third, there is frequently an intimate feedback relationship between senators and their key staff. On the one hand, senators select their staff and (implicitly or explicitly) communicate to their staff the types of positions and styles of presentation they find acceptable. On the other hand, the staff have the opportunity to shape senators' views on many issues. Sharp disagreements or stylistic discrepancies between senators and key staff are likely to be rare.

5 Occasionally a selected statement was unscoreable because it was purely descriptive or procedural (e.g., noting the bills or amendments to be considered on a given day, descriptions of sequences of events). Such statements were omitted from the analysis and replaced by the next paragraph in the same speech. This is standard practice because some degree of active interpretation and manipulation of information is necessary for inferences regarding conceptual structure. As in previous work (Porter & Suedfeld, 1981; Suedfeld & Tetlock, 1977; Tetlock, 1979, 1981a, 1981b), well under 10% of the paragraphs sampled fit into the unscoreable category.
Table 1
Mean Integrative Complexity of Senatorial Policy Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1975</th>
<th>1976</th>
<th>Overall M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberals</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderates</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Note. Higher scores indicate greater integrative complexity.

Results

Table 1 presents the mean integrative complexity of senatorial policy statements in 1975 and 1976. We performed a 3 (liberal, moderate, conservative) × 2 (year) × 10 (number of paragraph units sampled for each senator in each year) analysis of variance of the integrative complexity scores. This analysis revealed significant differences in the integrative complexity of liberal, moderate, and conservative senators, $F(2, 42) = 12.71$, $p < .001$. The Tukey HSD test (Winer, 1971) indicated that liberals and moderates both advanced significantly more complex policy statements than did conservatives, $q(3, 42) = 5.70$, $p < .01$, and $q(3, 42) = 6.72$, $p < .01$, respectively. There was no statistically detectable difference between liberals and moderates, $q(3, 42) = 1.21$, ns. No other effects were significant.6

We performed a series of analyses of covariance to examine the ideology–integrative complexity relationship controlling for the following variables: political party affiliation, age, education, and length of service in the Senate. Only one of these covariates, political party affiliation, accounted for a significant amount of variance in integrative complexity, $F(1, 41) = 4.61$, $p < .04$. Republicans tended to be less complex than Democrats. However, there was still a significant difference in the integrative complexity of conservatives, moderates, and liberals, even after controlling for party affiliation, $F(2, 41) = 5.04$, $p < .02$. Once again, the Tukey HSD test indicated the policy statements of liberals and moderates were more complex than those of conservatives, $q(3, 41) = 3.59$, $p < .05$, and $q(3, 41) = 5.24$, $p < .01$, respectively.

We employed multiple regression to explore in more detail the interrelationships among background variables, ideology, and integrative complexity. The first analysis used political ideology, education, age, and length of service in the Senate to predict the mean integrative complexity of senators based on their 1975 and 1976 statements.7 The regression accounted for 26% of the variance. Political ideology emerged as the only significant predictor of integrative complexity standardized $\beta = .53$, $t(40) = 3.01$, $p < .02$. More liberal senators tended to be more complex. The second analysis used integrative complexity, education, age, and length of service in the Senate to predict the mean ideological rating of senators based on their 1975 and 1976 voting records. This regression accounted for 52% of the variance. Integrative complexity and education both emerged as significant predictors. More integratively complex individuals, standardized $\beta = .349$, $t(40) = 3.02$, $p < .01$, and more educated individuals, standardized $\beta = .346$, $t(40) = 2.66$, $p < .02$, tended to be more liberal. Both multiple regressions thus indicate that the ideology–integrative complexity relationship does not depend on the particular background variables used in this study.

One potential confounding variable not controlled for in these regression analyses was the type of issue being discussed. Are liberals and moderates more integratively complex than conservatives because they discuss different issues? To explore this possibility, we drew on Clausen’s (1973) work on congressional voting patterns to distinguish five issue domains with which senators frequently deal: civil liberties, social welfare, agricultural policy, government management/macroeconomic policy, and international involvement. We then attempted to classify each senator’s statements into one of these five categories (73% intercoder agreement). This post hoc

6 The fairly low levels of integrative complexity seen in Table 1 are consistent with previous work scoring college undergraduates’ responses to the Paragraph Completion Test (Schroder, Driver, & Streufert, 1967) and archival records of the statements of a number of other political leadership groups (Suedfeld & Rank, 1976; Suedfeld & Tetlock, 1977; Tetlock, 1979, 1981b).

7 Political party affiliation was not included in these analyses to reduce multicollinearity among the independent variables (Kenny, 1980).
analysis revealed no pronounced differences in either the frequency with which liberals, moderates, and conservatives discussed each issue area or in the integrative complexity of their statements on each issue area.

Finally, we explored the stability of individual differences among senators in integrative complexity. An interesting pattern emerged. To estimate the internal consistency of senatorial complexity scores, we computed Cronbach's alphas for both 1975 and 1976. These alphas were .84 in 1975 and .80 in 1976 (levels of reliability that compare favorably with many self-report measures of attitudes and personality traits). In contrast, there was only a modest degree of stability in mean senatorial complexity between 1975 and 1976, \( r(43) = .34, p < .025 \) (one-tailed).

Because the mean levels of integrative complexity in 1975 and 1976 were not significantly different, this relatively low correlation cannot be explained simply in terms of a general shift in integrative complexity scores between the 2 years. We explored, therefore, whether the temporal instability of integrative complexity scores was due to shifts in the issues that individual senators discussed in 1975 and 1976 (using the five category system for issue classification derived from Clausen's, 1973, work). Unfortunately, the results were inconclusive. Although individual senators often focused on very different issues in the 2 years, there was no general trend for (a) certain types of issues to be discussed more frequently in 1 year or (b) senators to be more or less complex in discussing certain types of issues. If variation in the issues discussed accounts for the temporal instability of complexity scores, it must be due to a thus far elusive interaction in which senatorial complexity depends on both ideological orientation and issue domain (see Discussion for speculation relevant to this point).

Discussion

The results revealed that conservative senators presented issues in significantly less integratively complex ways than their liberal or moderate colleagues. This trend, moreover, remained significant even after controlling for political party affiliation, education, age, and length of service in the Senate. The findings thus support the hypothesis derived from work on the authoritarian personality and conservatism in general: persons on the socio-political right were most prone to rely on simple evaluative (good vs. bad) rules in interpreting policy issues. The findings are also highly compatible with the research literature on the relationships between cognitive style and ideology in nonelite samples such as college students and survey respondents (cf. Stone, 1980).

Other possible interpretations of the data do, however, exist. An advocate of the ideologue hypothesis could argue that the United States Senate does not include enough representatives of the ideological left to provide a fair test of the hypothesis (i.e., there is no influential socialist or communist party in the United States). More appropriate legislative testing sites might be found in Great Britain or in the parliamentary democracies of western Europe. Unfortunately, this objection begs the question of how far one must move toward the sociopolitical left or right to be counted as an ideologue. It also raises an even more fundamental problem. What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for identifying an individual as an ideological thinker? Is holding an extreme or deviant position sufficient? There is an obvious problem with this solution. Extremism is a relativistic concept. Positions that are radical in one society or historical period appear moderate in other contexts (e.g., one could be a moderate fascist in Hitler's Germany or a moderate communist in the Soviet Union under Stalin). Is it realistic then to expect the emergence of personality-ideology relationships that have substantial cross-cultural or transhistorical validity? Defenders of the ideologue hypothesis need to propose explicit, defensible criteria for specifying the conditions that must be satisfied to test the hypothesis.

One refinement (or perhaps alternative) to the ideologue hypothesis involves developing a more sophisticated taxonomy of political ideologies than the simple left–right continuum. For instance, Rokeach (1973) has proposed that the major ideological movements of the 20th century vary on two key dimensions: the importance they attach to the basic or terminal values of freedom and equality.
According to Rokeach, capitalists and democratic socialists value freedom, whereas communists and fascists do not. In contrast, communists and democratic socialists value equality, but capitalists and fascists do not. Because there is often a tension or trade-off relationship between equality and freedom (especially economic freedom) in policy debates, advocates of ideologies that place close-to-equal importance on these values (liberals, social democrats) may be forced to engage in more integratively complex thought than advocates of ideologies that attach high importance to only one or neither of these values (communists, laissez-faire capitalists, fascists). Advocates of pluralistic or multivalued ideologies must seek integrative solutions that satisfy more constraints or requirements. This value-pluralism interpretation may explain why liberals and moderates were more complex than conservatives in the Senate. Presumably liberals and moderates attached closer-to-equal importance to freedom and equality than did conservatives who attached much more importance to freedom than to equality. Liberals and moderates may thus have felt a greater need to differentiate the impact of policies on both freedom and equality and to develop integrative solutions that satisfied both values. The pluralism interpretation also provides a theoretical criterion for specifying how far to the sociopolitical left one must go for integrative complexity to fall off: to the point where concern for equality consistently dominates concern for individual rights and liberties (e.g., radical socialists, communists). Finally, the value-pluralism analysis leads to unique predictions concerning ideology-by-issue interactions in integrative complexity. Individuals are more likely to think about policy issues in integratively complex ways to the degree two (or more) terminal values imply contradictory courses of action. 8 For a conservative, this might occur when concern for individual liberty clashes with concern for national security (e.g., compulsory military service). For a moderate socialist, this might occur when concern for economic efficiency and growth clashes with concern for equality (e.g., redistributive income policies). Further work is needed to explore ideology-by-issue variations in complexity of this type.

Another qualification to the current findings should also be noted. The less complex policy statements of conservative senators may not so much reflect variation in cognitive style as in rhetorical style. Liberals and moderates represented the majority of senators in the 94th Congress and may have perceived themselves in a responsible policy-making role that required presenting issues in integratively complex ways. In contrast, conservatives may have perceived themselves in an opposition role with fewer reality constraints that granted them the rhetorical license to present issues in stark, dichotomous terms. Work on pre- to postelection shifts in presidential rhetoric lends some plausibility to this interpretation. Tetlock (1981a) found that presidential candidates during election campaigns (an opposition role) made less integratively complex policy statements than those same individuals made once they assumed office (a policy-making role). Politicians may believe that integratively simple rhetoric is useful for rallying opposition to the government, but that more complex rhetoric is necessary for defending policies one actually expects to implement. An interesting test of this rhetorical style hypothesis would involve a replication of the present study in a legislative body dominated by conservatives. The recent American election of 1980, in which conservative Republicans won both the presidency and control of the Senate, provides a timely opportunity for conducting such a test (timely inasmuch as most senators in the 1975–76 sample remained in office after the 1980 election).

Finally, we should be careful not to draw sweeping or politically motivated conclusions from the data. For instance, it would be incorrect to conclude that conservatives are less intelligent or knowledgeable about policy is-

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8 This statement of the value-pluralism position treats integratively complex thought as one means of resolving cognitive inconsistencies among core values. Individuals may also rely on integratively simple resolutions of value conflicts such as denial (minimizing the importance of one of the competing values) and bolstering (emphasizing the importance of the other competing value; cf. Abelson, 1959). Of course, reliance on these integratively simple modes of inconsistency reduction would over time tend to transform pluralistic ideologies into monistic ones.
issues than moderates or liberals. Integrative complexity is more appropriately viewed as a measure of knowledge in use in a particular situation, not as a measure of intellectual ability or understanding (constructs that would be better assessed by a focused examination or test). It would be equally inappropriate to conclude that conservative senators are more likely than their liberal or moderate counterparts to adopt policies detrimental to the long-term national interest. A plausible case can, of course, be made that high-level policy issues are extremely complex and that, *ceteris paribus*, individuals who process information in integratively complex ways are more likely to develop effective solutions than are individuals who process information in integratively simple ways (cf. Katz & Kahn, 1966, on the importance of "system perspective" in high-level decision making). This argument needs, however, to be tested. In addition, a perhaps equally plausible case can be made for the opposite hypothesis. Individuals who process information in integratively simple ways may possess the talent for penetrating to the essence of controversial issues and then decisively taking principled stands on these issues. The study reported here offers no empirical justification for assuming a positive or negative relationship between integrative complexity and the soundness of the policies advocated.

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9 In this connection, we should consider the fact that the mean levels of integrative complexity ranged from 1.79 (conservatives) to 2.38 (liberals) to 2.51 (moderates). Given the educational and occupational backgrounds of the senators, it stretches credulity to argue that these individuals were frequently incapable of generating or understanding alternative interpretations of the issues discussed or of recognizing interrelationships among alternative interpretations.

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