

Feeling Superior Is a Bipartisan Issue: Extremity (Not Direction) of Political Views Predicts Perceived Belief Superiority

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Abstract

Accusations of entrenched political partisanship have been launched against both conservatives and liberals. But is feeling superior about one's beliefs a partisan issue? Two competing hypotheses exist: the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis (i.e., conservatives are dogmatic) and the ideological-extremism hypothesis (i.e., extreme views on both sides predict dogmatism). We measured 527 Americans' attitudes about nine contentious political issues, the degree to which they thought their beliefs were superior to other people's, and their level of dogmatism. Dogmatism was higher for people endorsing conservative views than for people endorsing liberal views, which replicates the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis. However, curvilinear effects of ideological attitude on belief superiority (i.e., belief that one's position is more correct than another's) supported the ideological-extremism hypothesis. Furthermore, responses reflecting the greatest belief superiority were obtained on conservative attitudes for three issues and liberal attitudes for another three issues. These findings capture nuances in the relationship between political beliefs and attitude entrenchment that have not been revealed previously.

Keywords

attitudes, individual differences, personal values

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Political stalemates are nothing new, yet observers have suggested that contemporary American politics have been plagued by an unusual lack of compromise (Pew Research Center, 2012). Both ends of the political spectrum have accused one another of clinging to partisan ideals and have bemoaned one another's refusal to cooperate and compromise in the best interests of the country. Of course, groups in conflict typically cast their opponent as the irrational, obstinate party that is unable to see beyond its own ideals and interests for the common good. Yet the question may be raised as to whether, in fact, one end of the American political spectrum believes more strongly in the superiority of its principles and positions than the other end does.

We use the term *belief superiority* to refer to an individual's conviction that his or her own beliefs or attitudes are better or more correct than other possible viewpoints. Although belief superiority is related to the certainty that

one's attitudes or beliefs are correct, belief superiority and belief (or attitude) certainty are not precisely the same. Attitude certainty involves the degree to which people are sure of their views, whereas belief superiority necessarily involves a comparative conclusion that one's beliefs or attitudes are superior to other people's beliefs or attitudes (Petty, Briñol, Tormala, & Wegener, 2007). One can be confident about one's views but still believe that others have equally valid opinions. For example, a devout Buddhist may believe strongly in Buddhist teachings but yet still recognize that other religions have valid viewpoints. Conversely, a person could be

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uncertain about an attitude or a belief and yet feel that his or her tenuously held belief was nonetheless better than everyone else's. For example, someone who has spent many years researching health-care policy might feel that his or her views are superior to those of most other people yet still not feel certain that his or her perspective on this complicated issue is correct. To feel superior in one's attitude or belief, one has to feel not only that one is correct but also that all other views are inferior.

Within the United States, political conservatives are often viewed as both more certain of their views and less willing to compromise than political liberals. Indeed, this difference would seem to emerge naturally from the ways in which liberals and conservatives differ psychologically. Research shows that people who endorse conservative viewpoints score higher on constructs related to dogmatism, intolerance of ambiguity, and closed-mindedness, whereas those who endorse liberal perspectives tend to score higher in openness (Choma, Hafer, Dywan, Segalowitz, & Busseri, 2012; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003b). Furthermore, given the links between political conservatism and religious fundamentalism in the United States, many conservatives base their political opinions on religious beliefs that they view as incontrovertible and sacrosanct (Hillygus & Shields, 2005; Manza & Brooks, 1997; Woodberry & Smith, 1998).

But do these patterns indicate that those who endorse conservative values are necessarily more convinced of the superiority of their views than are those who endorse liberal values? Some researchers say yes, arguing that conservatives are more dogmatic, rigid, and intolerant of ambiguity than liberals (Altemeyer, 1998; Stone, 1980). However, others have suggested that both liberals and conservatives are equally certain that they are correct and that the extremity, rather than the content, of ideologies predicts dogmatism (Holsti, 1974; Ray, 1973; Shils, 1954). A great deal of controversy has arisen from these competing claims, often referred to, respectively, as the *rigidity-of-the-right* and the *ideological-extremism* hypotheses (for reviews, see Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003a; Jost et al., 2003b). In recent years, sentiment in the field has swung toward the rigidity-of-the-right side, which led Kimmelmeier (2007) to conclude that despite the intuitive appeal of the ideological-extremism hypothesis, "there is no compelling support for the idea that extremists at both ends of the political spectrum are equally more dogmatic or more rigid than are centrists or independents" (p. 85). Although this conclusion might seem to settle the issue, at least with respect to dogmatism, political liberals often appear to be as steadfastly certain that their beliefs are superior as political conservatives do, which raises the question of whether previous research has failed to capture some

nuance in the relationship between ideology and belief superiority.

Dogmatism is typically conceptualized in terms of ideological inflexibility, and the development of dogmatism scales sprung from decades of research on right-wing authoritarianism, fascism, and social dominance (Altemeyer, 1998, 2002; Duckitt, 2009; Rokeach, 1960). Dogmatic statements tend to reflect the centrality of rigidity—the belief that one's views could not (and should not) change from what they are currently. We contrasted the conceptualization of dogmatism with that of belief superiority—the belief that one's own views are superior to other people's views. To demonstrate this distinction, consider that a person's beliefs could evolve and change over time (which suggests that he or she is not particularly rigid or dogmatic), but that person could believe that the views he or she holds during each point in that evolution are superior to all other views. In contrast, a person high in dogmatism would not likely change his or her beliefs.

Another difference between belief superiority and dogmatism is that belief superiority does not imply an overarching belief system. Whereas dogmatic rigidity tends to be strongly tied to specific religious or political dogma, and thus a set of beliefs, one can believe in the superiority of one's views about any one issue without necessarily extending that feeling of superiority to all of that issue's related components. Although there are likely people who feel that their beliefs are superior across many domains (we trust that readers can bring to mind examples of such people), people may easily feel superior about certain beliefs but not others. Thus, for instance, people may believe in the superiority of their beliefs about climate change yet not assume that their beliefs are more correct than other people's when it comes to questions about abortion or tax policy.

Not only do individuals—liberals and conservatives alike—vary in the issues about which they feel superior, but also evidence suggests that liberals and conservatives may be dogmatic about different issues. For example, compared with conservatives, liberals are more dogmatic about global warming, equally dogmatic about civil unions, and less dogmatic about affirmative action (Schkade, Sunstein, & Hastie, 2010). These findings suggest that correlations between general measures of liberalism/conservatism and dogmatism may not tell the whole story. This is hardly a new idea. In his description of value pluralism, Tetlock (1986) conjectured that studying individual issues would help to resolve the competing rigidity-of-the-right and ideological-extremism hypotheses. Yet little research has addressed this question.

The present study examined both belief superiority and dogmatism to test the viability of the ideological-extremism and rigidity-of-the-right hypotheses. Do people who

endorse the extremes of conservative and liberal viewpoints demonstrate greater belief superiority or dogmatism than those who hold moderate views (consistent with the ideological-extremism hypothesis), or are conservative views consistently associated with greater dogmatism and belief superiority than liberal views are (as predicted by the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis)? Both hypotheses could be correct: People who endorse extreme views in either ideological direction might show more belief superiority and be more dogmatic about their beliefs than those in the middle of the spectrum, and at the same time, people with extremely conservative views might be more dogmatic and show more belief superiority than those with extremely liberal views. Furthermore, by examining specific political issues rather than overall political ideology, we also examined the possibility that conservative views predict belief superiority for some issues, whereas liberal views predict belief superiority for other issues.

Method

Participants

Participants were 527 individuals (289 men, 238 women), ages 18 to 67 years ($M = 30.7$), who were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk during the second week of July, 2012. Forty-nine percent had at least some college education. Participants signed up for a study of "personal opinions" and were paid \$1.00 for their participation.

Procedure

Once participants signed up for the study, they were directed to a set of online questionnaires. The first questionnaire was a measure of belief superiority in the realm of political issues. This measure assessed beliefs about nine controversial political issues on which liberals and conservatives in the United States currently tend to disagree: (a) health care (the degree to which health care should be covered by the government or by private insurance), (b) illegal immigration (the degree to which people who enter the country illegally should be dealt with more strictly or more leniently than at present), (c) abortion (the conditions under which abortion should be legal), (d) how large of a role the government should play in helping people in need, (e) voter identification (whether people should be required to show personal identification in order to vote), (f) the degree to which income taxes are too high or too low, (g) the conditions under which torture should be used to obtain information from terrorists, (h) affirmative action, and (i) the degree to which national and state laws should be based on religious beliefs.

Two questions were asked about each topic. First, participants indicated their attitude toward the topic on either a 4- or 5-point scale, depending on the item, which ranged from a strong liberal position to a strong conservative position. Items that allowed for a neutral midpoint were rated on a 5-point scale, whereas items that did not (e.g., "When should the United States use torture to obtain information from terrorists?") were rated on a 4-point scale (e.g., 1 = *never*, 2 = *only in extreme circumstances to prevent an impending terrorist act*, 3 = *when ever it might yield useful information*, 4 = *all terrorists should be tortured*). For some items, the liberal position was reflected by a high score, and for some items, the conservative position was reflected by a high score. The full set of items can be found in the Supplemental Material available online.

After rating their attitude, participants indicated how much more correct their belief about that issue is compared with other people's beliefs. Correctness ratings were made on 5-point scales (1 = *no more correct than other viewpoints*, 2 = *slightly more correct than other viewpoints*, 3 = *somewhat more correct than other viewpoints*, 4 = *much more correct than other viewpoints*, 5 = *totally correct—mine is the only correct view*).

Participants also completed Altemeyer's (2002) Dogmatism scale. On this scale, participants rated their agreement (from 1, *strongly disagree*, to 5, *strongly agree*) with 10 dogmatic statements, such as, "Anyone who is honestly and truly seeking the truth will end up believing what I believe," and "If you are 'open-minded' about the most important things in life, you will probably reach the wrong conclusions." Finally, participants reported their age, gender, and education level before being debriefed and receiving payment.

Results

For ease of description and comparison, attitude ratings were rescored such that high scores always reflected more conservative attitudes. Continuous predictor variables were mean-centered before being entered into regression analyses. Given the number of analyses, we controlled for Type I error by setting the alpha level at .01.

Ideological differences in dogmatism

To begin, we tested the rigidity-of-the-right and ideological-extremism hypotheses by examining whether a linear or a quadratic relationship (or both) existed between participants' dogmatism scores and their overall political attitudes (the mean attitude rating across the nine issues). The results of this analysis supported the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis. Specifically, respondents who endorsed more conservative attitudes overall scored significantly

higher on the dogmatism scale, $\beta = 0.30$, $t(524) = 7.23$, $R^2 = .09$, $p < .001$. The quadratic effect of conservatism on dogmatism was not significant, and thus the ideological-extremism hypothesis was not supported, $\beta = 0.02$, $t(524) = 0.41$, n.s.

Ideological extremity and belief superiority

To obtain a more nuanced picture of the relationship between specific attitudes and belief superiority, we conducted nine hierarchical linear regression analyses in which participants' ratings of the correctness of each attitude were examined as a function of the linear and quadratic effects of the attitude rating (along the liberal-conservative dimension) for each political issue. A 10th hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to examine overall perceived superiority of beliefs as a function of the linear and quadratic effects of overall political ideology (the mean of all attitude ratings).

As shown in Table 1, the linear effect of attitude rating was significant for four of the nine individual issues, but the direction of the effect differed across issues. Specifically, people who endorsed conservative views expressed greater belief superiority than people who endorsed liberal views when asked about voter identification laws ($\beta = 0.17$) and affirmative action ($\beta = 0.19$). More liberal attitudes were associated with greater belief superiority on the issues of government help for the needy ($\beta = -0.18$) and basing laws on religion ($\beta = -0.27$). The linear effect of overall ideology score was not significantly related to belief superiority across topics, presumably because conservatives and liberals felt superior on different topics.

To test the ideological-extremism hypothesis, we examined the quadratic effect of attitude rating while controlling for the linear term. The quadratic effect was significant for all nine political issues, as well as for the overall attitude measure. For all issues, higher scores on attitude ratings predicted greater belief superiority. The effect was obtained at the level of both overall ideology (Fig. 1) and individual attitude issues (Fig. 2). Across topics, the quadratic models accounted for between 11% and 24% of the variance in belief superiority.

Ideology and maximum belief superiority

For each issue, we compared people who selected the option indicating the greatest belief superiority (*mine is the only correct view*) with those who selected the other four options. As Table 2 shows, for three topics—voter identification, taxes, and affirmative action—participants who felt the most superior in their beliefs scored significantly higher in the conservative direction than

Table 1. Linear and Quadratic Effects of Attitudes Toward Political Issues on Belief Superiority

Issue and predictor	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β
Health care			
Linear effect	-0.11	0.05	-0.10
Quadratic effect	0.30	0.04	0.35*
Illegal immigration			
Linear effect	0.02	0.05	0.01
Quadratic effect	0.35	0.04	0.41*
Abortion			
Linear effect	0.07	0.05	0.07
Quadratic effect	0.36	0.04	0.43*
Government help for the needy			
Linear effect	-0.20	0.05	-0.18*
Quadratic effect	0.27	0.04	0.34*
Requiring voter identification			
Linear effect	0.26	0.07	0.17*
Quadratic effect	0.67	0.07	0.53*
Taxes			
Linear effect	0.14	0.06	0.11
Quadratic effect	0.34	0.05	0.31*
Use of torture on terrorists			
Linear effect	-0.14	0.08	-0.08
Quadratic effect	0.69	0.07	0.42*
Affirmative action			
Linear effect	0.28	0.07	0.19*
Quadratic effect	0.70	0.06	0.45*
Laws based on religion			
Linear effect	-0.37	0.06	-0.27*
Quadratic effect	0.33	0.05	0.45*
All issues combined			
Linear effect	0.03	0.08	0.02
Quadratic effect	0.55	0.09	0.25*

* $p < .01$.

those with lower superiority. For three issues—government aid for the needy, use of torture on terrorists, and basing laws on religion—respondents who endorsed the highest belief superiority leaned in a liberal direction. No significant differences were obtained for the remaining three issues.

Dogmatism as a covariate

The question can be raised whether the belief-superiority effects were due to participants' dispositional level of dogmatism. Additional hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to test whether the linear and quadratic effects would remain significant when dogmatism scores were included in the model. As might be expected, higher dogmatism was associated with higher perceived belief superiority for all attitudes (see Table 3). However, including dogmatism in the model did not wash out the relationships between attitude ratings and belief

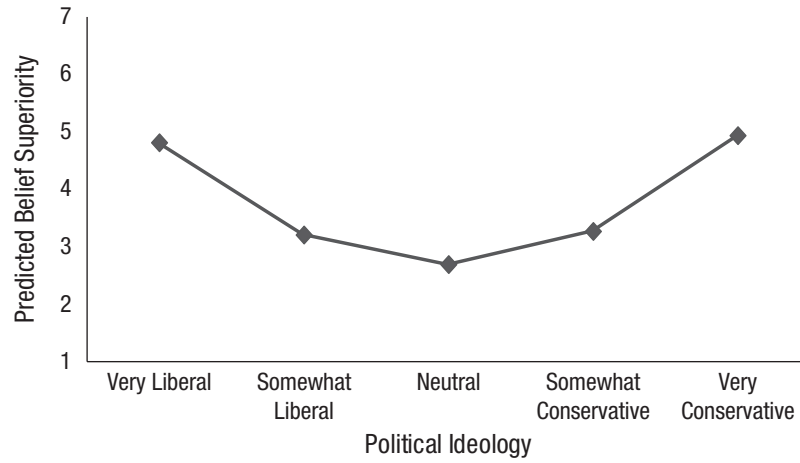


Fig. 1. Quadratic effect of overall political ideology (controlling for the linear term) on belief superiority.

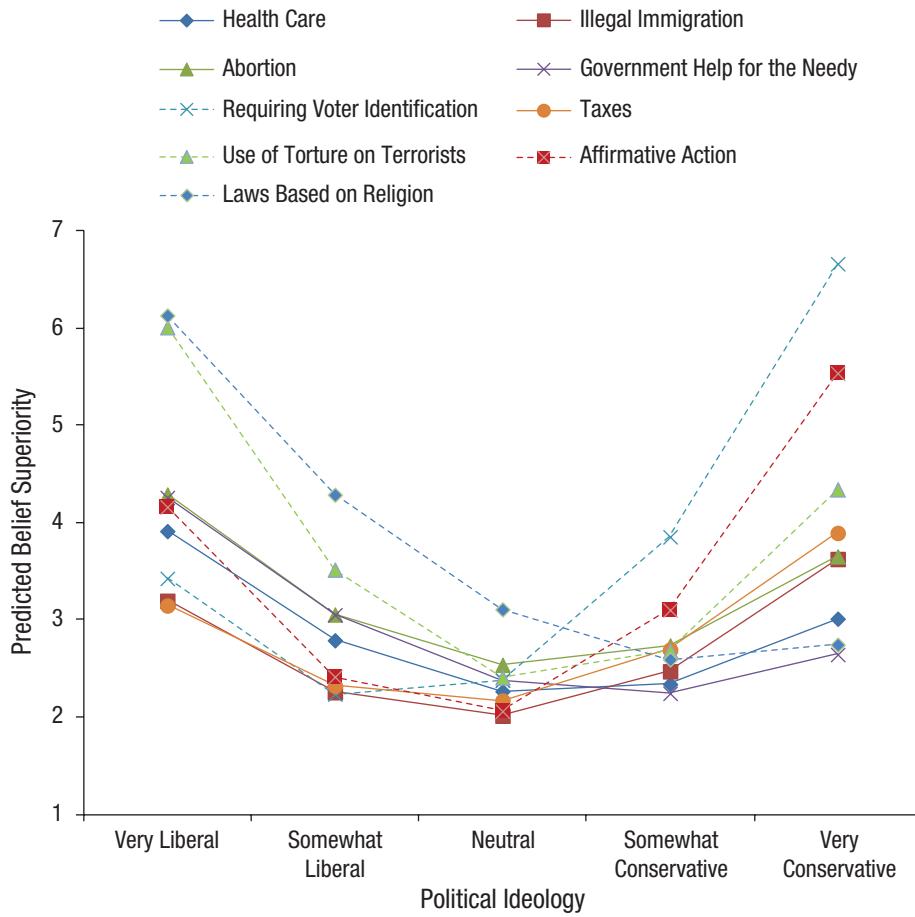


Fig. 2. Quadratic effect of political ideology (controlling for the linear term) on belief superiority, separately for nine different contentious issues.

Table 2. Ideological Differences on Contentious Issues Between Participants With the Highest Belief Superiority and All Others

Issue	Percentage of sample with highest belief superiority	Mean political attitude		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
		Nonsuperior	Superior		
Health care	12.3	2.7	2.2	$t(73.5) = 2.30$.02
Illegal immigration	9.9	3.3	3.5	$t(56.0) = 0.73$.41
Abortion	23.5	2.4	2.6	$t(157.8) = 1.28$.20
Government help for the needy	13.7	2.4	1.9	$t(86.6) = 2.66$.009
Requiring voter identification	24.5	3.0	3.5	$t(186.8) = 4.66$	< .001
Taxes	10.1	3.2	3.8	$t(57.7) = 2.70$.009
Use of torture on terrorists	20.3	2.1	1.8	$t(131.6) = 2.97$.004
Affirmative action	13.5	2.6	3.1	$t(78.59) = 2.98$.004
Laws based on religion	38.9	2.1	1.3	$t(518.2) = 10.00$	< .001

Note: Participants rated how much more correct they felt their beliefs were when compared with other people's beliefs on a scale from 1 (*no more correct than other viewpoints*) to 5 (*totally correct—mine is the only correct view*). Political attitudes were rated on either a 4- or 5-point scale; higher means reflect more conservative positions. The "nonsuperior" column shows means of participants who rated belief superiority 1, 2, 3, or 4, whereas the "superior" column shows means of participants who rated belief superiority 5. Because Levene's tests of equality of variances were significant, *t* tests were run without assumptions of equal variances.

superiority. Instead, it resulted in stronger linear effect for attitudes on all issues. In addition, all of the quadratic effects of attitude remained highly significant.

Discussion

This study examined the effect of belief superiority on nine contentious political issues. By asking participants to report their attitudes on these issues, along with their beliefs in the superiority of their viewpoint for each one, we were able to assess belief superiority for each of the nine topics rather than rely only on overall conservatism and belief-superiority scores. We also had participants complete a measure of dispositional dogmatism in order to compare our findings with those of past research on dogmatism and political ideology.

Replicating past research, our results showed a pronounced rigidity-of-the-right effect when examining the relationship between dogmatism (Altemeyer, 2002) and an overall index of conservative beliefs across the nine hot-button issues. No quadratic effect emerged for this analysis, which replicates research showing that even when curvilinear relationships between conservatism and dogmatism are obtained, they are generally much weaker than the linear relationships between conservatism and dogmatism (Jost et al., 2003a).

Yet the picture changed when we tested belief superiority—the insistence that one's specific beliefs are more correct than other people's beliefs—rather than dispositional dogmatism. There was a strong curvilinear relationship between attitude extremism and overall belief superiority, such that people at the extremes of the political spectrum felt most superior about their beliefs—a

finding that strongly supports the ideological-extremism view. In fact, no linear trend emerged for this overall measure.

Drilling deeper revealed nuances across specific political topics. Liberal viewpoints predicted greater belief superiority on government help for the needy and religion-based laws, whereas conservative views predicted greater belief superiority regarding voter identification and affirmative action. In addition, respondents who insisted that they had the only possible correct view were split evenly in terms of whether they endorsed conservative or liberal viewpoints. For all nine topics, the quadratic effects vastly outweighed any linear effects, which shows that people endorsing the extreme viewpoints felt the most superior about their beliefs.

As Inbar and Lammers (2012) and Tetlock (2012) pointed out, individual liberals and conservatives often have divergent and heterogeneous views. Thus, knowing that someone self-identifies as liberal or conservative overall does not clearly predict what the person thinks about particular issues. Researchers who are interested in political issues other than the topics that we covered (e.g., gun control, same-sex marriage, climate change) may need to look at these topics individually rather than relying on measures of overall conservatism and liberalism. We believe that our issue-based approach is a better way to explore this topic and others like it.

One might assume that people who hold an extreme view would necessarily believe that their perspective is better than other viewpoints. After all, examples of political extremists that come easily to mind seem to involve people who are single-mindedly certain that they are right. However, the midpoint of the attitude scales in this

Table 3. Linear and Quadratic Effects of Attitudes Toward Political Issues on Belief Superiority When Controlling for Dogmatism

Issue and predictor	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β
Health care			
Dogmatism	0.02	0.00	0.15*
Linear attitude effect	-0.26	0.05	-0.23*
Quadratic attitude effect	0.30	0.04	0.35*
Illegal immigration			
Dogmatism	0.02	0.00	0.18*
Linear attitude effect	0.09	0.04	0.08
Quadratic attitude effect	0.35	0.03	0.41*
Abortion			
Dogmatism	0.02	0.01	0.15*
Linear attitude effect	-0.20	0.05	-0.18*
Quadratic attitude effect	0.35	0.04	0.42*
Government help for the needy			
Dogmatism	0.02	0.00	0.15*
Linear attitude effect	-0.40	0.05	-0.46*
Quadratic attitude effect	0.26	0.04	0.33*
Requiring voter identification			
Dogmatism	0.02	0.01	0.15*
Linear attitude effect	0.81	0.08	0.51*
Quadratic attitude effect	0.66	0.06	0.52*
Taxes			
Dogmatism	0.02	0.00	0.23*
Linear attitude effect	0.17	0.05	0.13*
Quadratic attitude effect	0.33	0.04	0.30*
Use of torture on terrorists			
Dogmatism	0.02	0.00	0.11*
Linear attitude effect	-0.48	0.08	-0.27*
Quadratic attitude effect	0.70	0.07	0.42*
Affirmative action			
Dogmatism	0.02	0.00	0.17*
Linear attitude effect	0.35	0.06	0.23*
Quadratic attitude effect	0.71	0.06	0.46*
Laws based on religion			
Dogmatism	-0.02	0.01	-0.13*
Linear attitude effect	-0.87	0.10	-0.65*
Quadratic attitude effect	0.34	0.05	0.45*
All issues combined			
Dogmatism	0.01	0.00	0.18*
Linear attitude effect	-0.07	0.08	-0.04
Quadratic attitude effect	0.54	0.09	0.25*

**p* < .01.

study indicated a clear-cut belief that the respondent could endorse with varying degrees of superiority—such that “abortion should be legal in some cases” or that “income taxes in the United States are just about right; neither too low nor too high.” Furthermore, attitude certainty has been empirically shown to differ from attitude extremity (Tormala & Rucker, 2007). Thus, our measure

of attitude extremity was an independent assessment of attitude content that predicted feelings of belief superiority rather than an indication of certainty, confidence, or superiority about the attitude at hand.

So why did our results on belief superiority differ from those uncovered by previous research on dogmatism? One possibility is that many of the studies that make up the canon of dogmatism research were conducted before 1980 and relied on a conservatism scale (the C-scale) that was created in the late 1960s (Jost et al., 2003b). Modern liberalism and conservatism in the United States may have changed sufficiently to provide different patterns of belief superiority. Yet this explanation is unlikely, given our own results supporting the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis on dogmatism.

Other researchers have shown that motivation may play a role in the relationship between dogmatism and attitudes as well. For example, Morgan, Mullen, and Skitka (2010) found evidence that liberals may be dogmatic, rigidly believing in egalitarian ideals just as strongly as conservatives believe in individualistic ideals, but that both parties can think flexibly when motivated to do so. People at the extreme ends of ideological positions may be strongly motivated to maintain their viewpoints, and the fact that their views lie at the extremes makes it less likely that they will consider alternative perspectives. Indeed, people who are moderate, or slightly left of center, are most likely to hold views that conflict with one another (Tetlock, 1986), whereas people at the extremes do not have their resolve diluted by conflicting views.

Furthermore, as noted, belief superiority does not include the unchanging, inflexible element implied by dogmatism. Thus, people who endorse extremely liberal views may feel as equally superior in their beliefs as those endorsing extremely conservative views, but they might be more likely to adjust their views over time with changes in evidence, social norms, or other people's influence. Longitudinal studies are needed to test whether people who endorse liberal viewpoints are more likely than people who endorse conservative viewpoints to change their views (rather than merely endorsing that possibility).

Further, whereas dogmatism is generally viewed as a personality characteristic or general style of thinking (Altemeyer, 2002; Duckitt, 2009; Rokeach, 1960), belief superiority is domain specific. For example, political junkies may feel superior about their political beliefs but not necessarily believe that their insights about religion or sports teams are better than other people's. Even more specifically, they may feel superior about their views on gun control but not about their beliefs about energy policy. Of course, individual differences in belief superiority may exist, but the fact that liberals and conservatives show the greatest belief superiority on different topics proves that it can be quite content specific.

Overall, the current research suggests that whether or not one finds evidence for rigidity of the right or ideological extremism depends on which issues are examined and how the question is asked. Our findings also converge with other research suggesting that liberals and conservatives do not always differ in the ways that have been assumed (Chambers, Schlenker, & Collisson, 2013; Schlenker, Chambers, & Le, 2012). Taken as a whole, these findings suggest that the mechanisms behind political group differences deserve more careful and nuanced consideration.

Of course, these findings are based on American respondents, which leaves open the question of whether similar patterns will be obtained in other cultures with different political systems. Undoubtedly, the hot-button issues that distinguish liberals and conservatives differ around the world, yet we know of no cross-cultural evidence that is relevant to our major finding regarding a curvilinear relationship between attitude extremity and belief superiority. Certainly the historical record has shown extreme and destructive political movements on both ends of the spectrum (e.g., Communism on the left and Nazism on the right), in which party members reacted harshly against contradictory viewpoints. Although our data addressed only current American political topics, we suspect that the presumed superiority of belief held by people with extreme views might have contributed to historical extremism, just as we suspect it is involved in political disputes around the world today. That said, there may be cultural or societal differences in the social acceptability of pronouncing one's views as superior. Researchers have found cultural differences in the acceptability of claiming oneself as above average on various traits—including intelligence (Kurman, 2002). Cultural modesty norms may influence the domain of attitudes and beliefs as well, which could lead to less belief superiority in some cultures than in others—or at least, fewer outward declarations or displays of such beliefs. In addition, recent data suggest that a similar U-shaped pattern is found in other attitude domains, including relatively trivial ones involving etiquette, social norms, and personal preferences (Jongman-Sereno, Toner, & Leary, 2013), which indicates that the pattern is not confined specifically to political attitudes.

Finally, our results should not be interpreted to mean that people who endorse extremely liberal or conservative attitudes are equally unreasonable in their belief superiority with respect to political issues. Belief superiority is sometimes a reasonable or justified position based on objective evidence. Nothing in this study addressed the objectivity of various beliefs, and thus the results cannot be used to assess whether political belief superiority (in either a liberal or a conservative direction) is warranted.

Author Contributions

K. Toner, M. Leary, and K. Jongman-Sereno developed the study concept, design, and procedure and collected the data. Data were analyzed and interpreted by K. Toner and M. Leary. M. Asher searched the literature. K. Toner drafted the manuscript, and M. Leary, M. Asher, and K. Jongman-Sereno provided critical revisions. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript for submission.

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Kaitlin Toner is now at Vanderbilt University.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared that they had no conflicts of interest with respect to their authorship or the publication of this article.

Supplemental Material

Additional supporting information may be found at <http://pss.sagepub.com/content/by/supplemental-data>

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