WORLDVIEW POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES AND GREAT BRITAIN

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Abstract

Scholars consistently find that most people do not think about politics in ideological terms. What, then, underlies the broad outlines of how citizens think about politics? Building on past work on authoritarianism, we implicate a driving force behind individuals' political attitudes in their philosophy about life—their "worldview." We posit that people use beliefs developed from their interactions with their everyday world to inform their affinities and preferences when analogous matters enter the political realm. We theorize and empirically validate a multidimensional measure of worldview in the United States and United Kingdom. Our measure consists of four related, but distinct, dimensions: authority, community, competitiveness, and incrementalism. We show that each is related to support for party identification, ideology, and a range of political attitudes in sensible ways.

Keywords: public opinion, worldview, party identification, ideology, survey, latent variable

Word count: 9,089

Seventy-plus years of survey research has struggled to answer a fundamental question: What ideas are at the root of citizens' most central political predispositions? Political socialization emphasizes parental transmission of party identity and, with it, preference for the party's approach to governing—something akin to its ideology (e.g. Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers 2009). Imparting a party identity might be simple, but not the ideology associated with it. Early research on the American electorate revealed only about twenty percent demonstrated ideological thinking by even the most generous definition, despite a steady diet of cues from their party leaders (Converse 1964). Clearer elite cues and skyrocketing education levels did little to improve those dismal numbers over time (Kinder and Kalmoe 2017; see also Achen and Bartels 2017). How can those who lack a philosophy about governing—to spend more or less, to regulate more or less, to favor federal control over state—pass one along to younger generations? We neither think they can nor do. We propose an alternative understanding, one that suggests the mass public may possess more tools to make sense of politics than scholars of public opinion conventionally account for (see also Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991).

We argue that the socialization process more likely imparts a worldview than an ideology. A collection of beliefs about how the world works, a worldview is more a philosophy about life than a philosophy about governing. Starting very early in life, lived experiences can encourage people to believe, for example, that "slow and steady wins the race," "those who look and sound different might be dangerous," "orderliness and cleanliness are next to godliness" or "winning isn't everything; it's the only thing." Such beliefs reflect dimensions of people's worldviews. In stark contrast to ideology, it is no stretch to believe that citizens can develop and connect them to political issues when matters germane to them become salient. Drawing on theories of analogical reasoning (e.g. Gentner

1983), we argue that different facets of life provide valuable metaphors for politics. This view finds support in generations of scholars and commentators who have demonstrated that people make sense of the unfamiliar by drawing on the familiar, using the personal as a guide to the political (Cramer 2016; Gamson 1992; Lane 1962; Lippmann 1922).

Scholars have shown that a worldview valuing hierarchical authority to preserve social order—most often labeled "authoritarianism"—helps people organize a wide range of political preferences (Stenner 2005; Hetherington and Weiler 2009; Johnston, Lavine, and Federico 2017). We suspect that other understandings about how best to approach life in general ought to play similar roles in politics. But which ones? Guided by commonalities in scholarship across political science, sociology, psychology, and anthropology (McClosky 1958; Schwartz 1992; Haidt 2012; Boehm 1999), we conceptualize and operationalize three novel constructs to accompany what we refer to as the authority dimension (rather than authoritarianism): a preference for 1) incremental over fundamental change, 2) a community of like individuals over individual uniqueness, and 3) competition over cooperation. People should be able to connect these constructs to politics relatively easily. When, for example, immigration comes on the agenda, those who have been socialized to prefer communities made up of people who look and think similarly can draw on that slice of their worldview to inform their immigration preferences.

Like the desirable qualities in children measures (Engelhardt, Feldman, and Hetherington 2021; Feldman and Stenner 1997), we create survey questions that make no reference to politics, because the beliefs they are designed to tap began to develop, theoretically, long before the stage in life when most begin to consider politics. Using such "pre-political" survey items helps capture the "pre-political" origin of worldview. It also reduces concerns about its endogeneity with the range of political identities and preferences

that worldview ought to be associated with (Engelhardt, Feldman, and Hetherington 2021), although it does not eliminate them altogether (see Bakker, Lelkes, and Malka 2021; Connors 2020). At a minimum, our approach improves on theories that place concepts like values and personality at their center but measure them using political preferences. For example, Inglehart (1977; 1990) uses preferences about political priorities, not understandings about the world that people developed early in life, to tap post-materialist values. Altemeyer's (1981) right wing authoritarianism scale falls victim to the same problem.

Employing data from the United States and United Kingdom, we test whether the worldview dimensions postulated here exist across country context and find strong empirical evidence that they do. The survey items exhibit similar factor structures across countries, and correlations between the dimensions they form are likewise similar. In addition, we show the various dimensions exert similar effects on issue preferences within the same domain across countries. Burkean incrementalism is most central to preferences about government's role on the traditional left-right dimension, and a worldview that favors a more homogeneous community is most central to immigration preferences. In the Covid-19 domain, both Burkean incrementalism and deference to authority exert strong effects in both country contexts, but the latter does so in a way that suggests the four-item desirable qualities in children index, usually employed as a measure of authoritarianism, may tap something different.

Moving to more global predispositions, our findings suggest issue salience affects the expression of worldview. Using panel data gathered over three years, we show that the manner in which specific life lessons inform ideological self-placement changes in a theoretically sensible way. When Brexit was the ascendent issue in 2019, the worldview dimension most closely related to ideological self-placement was preference for a

homogeneous community. Consistent with the findings referenced above that incrementalism is central to Covid-19 mitigation preferences, the association between ideological self-placement and incrementalism surged as the pandemic surged. Last, we demonstrate that the expression of worldview depends on institutional arrangements. In the two-party US, it divides Democrats from Republicans. In the UK, with its "two-party-plus" system, worldview not only divides party identifiers on the left from those on the right, but it also informs party identities within right (Conservative or Brexit) and left (Labour, Green or Liberal Democrat).

Worldview or Ideology?

Although the term "ideology" is ubiquitous and "worldview" uncommon in the study of mass politics, we think the latter is more valuable in understanding what divides the political views of ordinary citizens into competing camps. By "worldview," we mean a philosophy about life that informs an individual's "beliefs about the nature of the world and the priorities of a good society" (Hetherington and Weiler 2018, x-xi). Encompassing the philosophical, moral, and cultural considerations that inform how people approach life, worldview colors the glasses through which people perceive and evaluate aspects of the world around them, including political ones. This is in contrast to ideology, which is not a philosophy about life, but rather a philosophy about governing.

When we use the term "ideology," we have in mind philosophical differences among competing parties about the priorities government should address and the means to achieve them (Schattschneider 1960). To borrow Ellis and Stimson's (2012) distinction, this is people's operational ideology—what they think about the role government ought to play in redistributing wealth, regulating markets, and ensuring equality—not their symbolic ideology,

the label they use to identify themselves. In our view, a central reason citizens appear so "innocent of ideology" (McClosky 1964) is that scholars mostly conceptualize "liberal" and "conservative" in terms of operational ideology, and its meaning is grounded in the size and reach of government. Citizens' life experiences offer little guidance when it comes to things like redistributing or regulating.

In the long history of political conflict, however, dividing liberals from conservatives based on preferences for big or small government is an historical anomaly. Scholars in the 1950s and 1960s likely paired the term "ideology" with constraining preferences about the size of the state by happenstance; it was the central disagreement between the left and right at that particular time. While humans have been plagued by political disagreements for centuries (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Petersen 2015), only recently have governments had the capacity to redistribute, regulate, and ensure in the way they do today. Hence the big-state versus small-state understanding of ideology could not possibly reflect the character of ideological contestation over most of human history.

As such, conceptualizing and operationalizing characteristics of liberal and conservative impulses—worldviews to us—that apply now as they might have centuries ago is a better approach to understanding the roots of political disagreement and the organization of political beliefs. In his article about what he termed a "conservative personality," McClosky (1958) drew on conservative scholars to identify habits of mind that they had embraced over the last several centuries, long before government could provide many benefits and protections. He found that preferences for the status quo, obedience to authority, and maintaining time-honored traditions sat at its core, with concern about outsiders another key focus. Modern psychology would not describe these conservative habits of mind as a personality, but they reflect quite well the tenets of what we defined

above as a worldview—beliefs about how the world works best.[1] People almost certainly have experiences (e.g. attending church) or are taught life lessons (e.g. your parent's word is final) that encourage them to adopt general notions about the importance of traditions and who should be in charge of making decisions. Rooted in the familiar, they are also likely transmissible across generations.

We suspect that worldviews can serve as the knowledge base required for analogical reasoning to make sense of politics and governance (Gentner 1983). As two of the field's leading figures put it, "learning from cases is often easier than learning principles directly" (Gentner and Loewenstein 2002, 1422). Psychologists believe that analogies are fundamental to acquiring language and learning abstract concepts, making analogical reasoning a process that people are accustomed to deploying. When people encounter something unfamiliar, they search their memories for something familiar that they judge analogous to what they are trying to make sense of. After evaluating the match, they develop a common structure that links the base knowledge (e.g. family, business, or sports) to the less familiar subject (e.g. government).[2] Government might be remote to what most citizens experience, but things like, for example, being part of a family or running a business are not. We argue that the beliefs that people develop about how authority should be organized in a family or how a

[1] This is not to say that specific beliefs are the same now as then; the passage of time has modernized the beliefs of both liberals and conservatives. Rather we suspect a range of basic fault lines defining conservatives' disagreements with liberals are timeless.

[2] For a review, see Gentner and Loewenstein (2002).

business should be run provide helpful bases for analogical reasoning about how authority should be organized or how government should be run.[3]

We consider concepts like personality (Gerber et al. 2010), values (Schwartz 1994), and moral foundations (Haidt 2012) to be similar but distinct from worldview. Relative to other characteristic adaptations, we conceive of personality as more a function of nature as opposed to nurture. Although it is subject to some change throughout the life cycle, it is almost surely less so than values and worldviews. Values are conceptually closer to worldviews than personality characteristics, but they require people to use more abstract reasoning than worldviews do—especially the values most commonly used in political science research, such as individualism (liberty) and egalitarianism (equality) (Feldman 1988; Conover and Feldman 1981). In addition to values being relatively more difficult to apply, we also perceive a flaw in how scholars measure them. The fundamental conflict between liberty and equality reminds us that citizens often say they like two values, failing to appreciate that they often conflict. This is important because the almost ubiquitous Likert-scale approach to measuring values, whether in political science (Conover and Feldman

[3] Like with all heuristic processes, analogies may not lead to accurate inferences. For example, those who have experienced a personal economic setback and cut back on spending might use that as a metaphor for what government should do when the country faces a setback. Although Keynesian economics suggests that policy course would exacerbate rather than mitigate the problem, polling data clearly reveal that people do, in fact, reason this way during a downturn, favoring spending cuts by huge margins (Hetherington and Rudolph 2015).

1981) or sociology (Schwartz 1994), allows respondents to endorse conflicting values. Our measurement approach, explicated below, addresses this problem.

As for moral foundations, that research program was developed to explain variation in moral dispositions, specifically, with a normative goal of helping those on opposite sides of the political divide appreciate that their opponents are also good people (see, most notably, Haidt 2012). Our ambition is to consider more broadly the foundations on which people rest their political opinions and decisions. For example, our worldview dimension "incrementalism" is not itself a moral construct. We expect a worldview that prizes incremental over fundamental change will inform preferences on moral political issues, but we think its effects will be far broader than that.

We do not evaluate the relative performance of our worldview measures with measures of ideology in predicting political preferences. Rather, we accept the well-established finding that most do not think ideologically (Converse 1964; Kinder and Kalmoe 2017; Achen and Bartels 2017); ideological terms mostly matter because citizens rely on them as cultural symbols. Instead, we test the plausibility of a different path through which ordinary citizens come to understand their political choices. Significant associations between worldview and policy preferences and political identities will reflect evidence supporting our theory. Although we do not have data available to test parent-to-child socialization of worldview, we think socialization based on passing a philosophy about life along generationally is more realistic than transmitting a philosophy about why government spending might choke off innovation in the private sector or how government regulation could produce economic inefficiencies that stifle growth.

The Dimensionality of Worldview

To identify and measure every worldview dimension that people possess would be both impractical (survey time is starkly limited while understandings of the world are not) and theoretically suspect—not every life lesson is politically relevant. Instead, we focus on four dimensions that we judge especially likely to bear on political conflict. All plausibly emanate from concerns about the relative importance of maintaining order and security, which scholarship across an uncommonly wide range of disciplines identifies as important to how people organize their thinking (Graham, Haidt, and Nosek 2009; Jost 2017; Schwartz 1992; Smith et al. 2011). Recall from above, the dimensions are preferences about the proper 1) locus of authority, 2) pace of change, 3) level of community homogeneity, and 4) balance between cooperation and competition. Beliefs along these dimensions may vary among individuals but, because they are animated by the importance of maintaining order and security, ought to be associated with each other.

Deference to authority has a long (and somewhat checkered) history in political science and psychology. Adorno et al. (1950) sought to reckon with the atrocities of World War II—and the immediate security concerns associated with them—by explaining how such personality characteristics predisposed certain people to blindly follow their political leaders. Although much of this work was dismissed on methodological grounds, the centrality of authority is so wide-ranging across literatures that it ought not be ignored. Schwartz (1992) later identified authority as among the core values that guide human opinions and approaches across country context. It plays a similarly important role among Haidt's moral foundations (Graham, Haidt, and Nosek 2009; Haidt 2012), and, in anthropology, Boehm (1999) suggests views about hierarchy are central to understanding why both people and primates sometimes cooperate.

A preference for strong homogeneous community is likewise rooted in a storied personality and moral psychology literature. Valuing strong community connotes a desire to live and interact with individuals who look and speak similarly, hold similar beliefs, and practice traditions similar to one's own. Many argue this tendency is so fundamental to humankind that its roots lay in the genetic logic of species survival (e.g. Lopez, McDermott, and Petersen 2011). At their best, such beliefs manifest in a form of loyalty and collective security (Haidt 2012). At their worst, they may give rise to the all-too-familiar forms of ethnocentrism that plague even established democracies (Levinson 1950; Kinder and Kam 2009).

In addition, a preference for incremental as opposed to fundamental change embodies what might be considered the core feature of Burkean political conservatism: preference for the status quo and questioning the value of what others might see as progress (Oakeshott 1962). If change must occur, which in the march of time is all but certain, it should be incremental in case change produces unanticipated negative consequences. Those we call incrementalists can be identified by their respect for tradition and the value they place on the time-honored ideas and customs forged by their forebears (Schwartz 1992; 1994). Conventions, institutions, and established ways of doing things that have survived the test of time have demonstrated their value and should be preserved, not challenged.

Last, we add competitiveness. It has perhaps its closest analog in Schwartz's (1992; 1994) "achievement" value, which he describes as emphasizing social superiority, esteem, and egocentric satisfaction. Individuals high in competitiveness approach life with a tenacious, uncompromising grit, and they value others who do the same. While the other three worldview dimensions we identify above serve as more passive protections against

social and physical threat, competitiveness enables a more active approach to threat response.

This multidimensional operationalization of worldview is especially useful in the study of politics. A wide range of life lessons might apply to nearly any political issue that arises. The various dimensions can help us understand which types of lessons are, on average, more or less important in various political applications. Specifically, the strength of the correlation between a given worldview dimension and issue attitudes tells us *which* life lessons are relevant to any specific issue areas. Specifying several dimensions of worldview also provides a potentially helpful innovation to understanding what people have in mind when they embrace an ideological identity. Findings from the European context show that the issues most predictive of people's left-right ideological self-placement vary depending on the types of issues emphasized in the party system (Adams, De Vries, and Leiter 2012; de Vries, Hakhverdian, and Lancee 2013; Rekker 2016). Attention to refugees, immigration, and European integration combined to make the cultural (GAL-TAN) dimension of ideology dominant across Western democracies, with the economic dimension declining in salience (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002; Hooghe and Marks 2018). As a result, individuals now rely more on their cultural attitudes to inform their ideological identities.

But worldview can take us a step further, allowing us to demonstrate how different pre-political beliefs are activated, or not, by political and social context. Although we conceive of worldview as temporally stable within the individual, the impact of worldview on politics depends on context. Specifically, our community dimension should factor more heavily into people's identities when issues like immigration are salient, while incrementalism should be most associated with economic concerns. Competitiveness may be relevant to both economic and cultural issues.

Data and Measures

To demonstrate the efficacy of the multidimensional worldview paradigm in a cross-national context, we employ data from the United States and United Kingdom. Our United Kingdom data come from Waves 19-21 of the British Election Study internet panel, with individual waves fielded December 2019, June 2020, and May 2021. The worldview battery, which was completed by 7,265 respondents, appeared only on Wave 19. As for the US, we contracted with Qualtrics to administer an online survey to a sample of American adults calibrated to meet Census targets on race, gender, education, and age. The survey, which was in the field from October and November 2020, attracted 2,441 respondents.

Because each worldview dimension seeks to capture "pre-political" beliefs, we use survey items based on choices and shortcuts that people might encounter in their everyday lives, with no reference to politics. That is not to say they are not "apolitical," or divorced from politics. Indeed, the notion that they become quite political under certain circumstances is central to our theory. Our approach to measurement also provides the worldviews we capture enhanced immunity to the endogeneity concerns plaguing previous measures (Christie and Jahoda 1954; Engelhardt, Feldman, and Hetherington 2021; Feldman 2003).

Table 1: Worldview Survey Battery

Authority
Please tell me which one you think is more important for a child to have. • Curiosity/**Good manners** • **Obedience**/Self-reliance • **Orderly**/imaginative • Independence/**Respect for elders**
Community
Which statement comes closer to your own views—even if neither is exactly right?

• **I'm bothered when I see people in my community wearing clothing customary in other countries.**/ I'm not bothered when I see people in my community wearing clothing customary in other countries. • **It is important to me that people in my community speak English well.**/ It is not important to me that people in my community speak English well. • **Strong communities that emphasize strong marriages and families make real freedom possible.**/ Real freedom is when people can make their own choices without family or community trying to restrain them. Which description comes closest to describing your ideal community? • **Having neighbors who have a lot in common with each other**/ Having neighbors who are different in interesting ways
Competitiveness
Which trait is more important for a child to be? • Compromising/**Aggressive** • **Forceful**/Empathetic • Kind/**Tough** • **Strong-willed**/Good-natured
Incrementalism
Which statement comes closer to your own views—even if neither is exactly right? • **It is better to stick with established ideas that have proven their value.**/ It is better to search for new ways of doing things that might be better. • The world is always changing, so we should adjust our view of moral behavior to those changes./ **Even though the world is always changing, we should not adjust our view of moral behavior to those changes.** • To understand the world, people must free their minds from established traditions./ **Established traditions provide the wisdom necessary to understand the world.** • If ideas have been around for a long time, they probably need to be updated./ **If ideas have been around for a long time, they probably have wisdom in them.**

Note: Bolded response option denotes that which contributes to a higher score on each dimension.

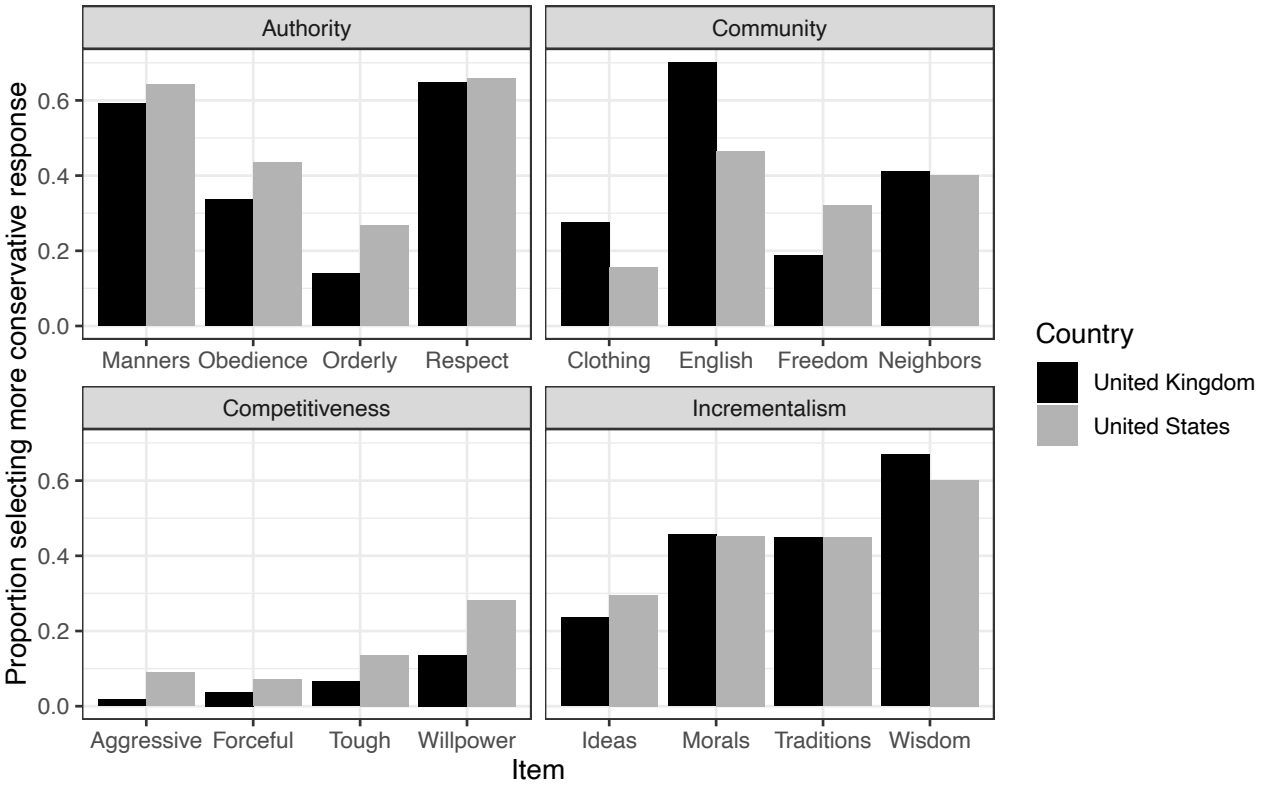
Table 1 displays the survey items used for each dimension. The bolded response option denotes that which contributes to a high score on each dimension. For each community and incrementalism item, respondents were asked to choose which of two statements "comes closer to your own views—even if neither is exactly right." The community items seek to tap into priorities that individuals hold for how the people with

whom they surround themselves look, sound, and behave. The incrementalism items are particularly concerned with how individuals value tradition and wisdom. In contrast, the authority and competitiveness items ask respondents to choose which of two traits they prefer to see in a child. Versions of this child-rearing battery have been widely used in previous research on authoritarian personality traits, but we extend it here to tap into aspects of competitiveness. The authority items focus on elements such as respect for elders and orderly behavior, while the competitiveness items home in on aspects like toughness and a strong-willed nature.

Worldview Across Country Contexts

Figure 1 displays how individuals responded to each survey item from Table 1. The proportion of respondents selecting the more "conservative" response option to each item (the bolded option in Table 1) is plotted for each country. Examining the prevalence of "conservative" responses across the United States and the United Kingdom reveals that the distributions are generally similar, although certain types of beliefs are more common in the former than in the latter. For example, Americans have a stronger preference for obedience and orderliness over self-reliance and imaginativeness. Americans also have a greater tendency to select the more "competitive" option in all four of the competitiveness items. Further, in the community dimension, Americans are more likely to believe that strong families form the basis of "true freedom," while the British are more likely to be averse to different types of clothing and foreign language speakers.

Figure 1: Distribution of Worldview Survey Items across Contexts



Note: The more "conservative" response option here corresponds to the bolded option in Table 1.

Latent Worldview Measures

To test the viability of the worldview concept cross-nationally, we perform confirmatory factor analyses to assess whether the items cohere similarly across contexts. The results for the United States and United Kingdom appear in Figures 2 and 3, respectively. Model fit statistics appear in the Supplementary Information. Both sets of data suggest that the worldview battery operates similarly across political contexts. Each survey item loads well onto the factor of the worldview dimension it is designed to capture, and the degree of these loadings varies only slightly across countries. With relatively strong correlations among latent factors, these models also suggest the dimensions cohere into what

Converse (1964) might describe as an overall worldview displaying constraint. The authority, community, and incrementalism factors are especially strongly connected to each other, with the three correlations ranging from 0.52 to 0.63 in the United States and 0.56 to 0.68 in the United Kingdom.

The competitiveness dimension presents differently from the other three. It is more weakly related to the other dimensions, with correlations ranging from -0.02 (authority) to 0.35 (community) in the United States and from -0.01 (incrementalism) to 0.28 (community) in the United Kingdom. Its paltry associations with authority and incrementalism indicates that a tendency to favor competition over cooperation is not related to maintaining order through hierarchical authority or incremental change, which we find sensible. Often, competing rather than cooperating can upset an established order or encourage fundamental change. However, competitiveness is robustly related associated with favoring a homogeneous community of like-minded people.[4]

[4] Although beyond the scope of this paper, this set of relationships might provide a solution to a puzzle in American politics. Conservatives embraced Donald Trump's competitive style, even though it sometimes ran counter to their general disposition toward orderliness and incremental change. Perhaps the reason is rooted in the stronger correlation between the competitiveness and community dimensions. Those who favor a more homogeneous community are, on average, more competitive. Because incrementalist and authority-minded conservatives also tend to favor a more homogeneous community, the community dimension may serve as a "worldview bridge" for those who value incrementalism and authority, especially when Trump directed his competitiveness at "outsiders" like international trading partners, immigrants, and Black Lives Matter protesters.

Figure 2: United States Confirmatory Factor Analysis

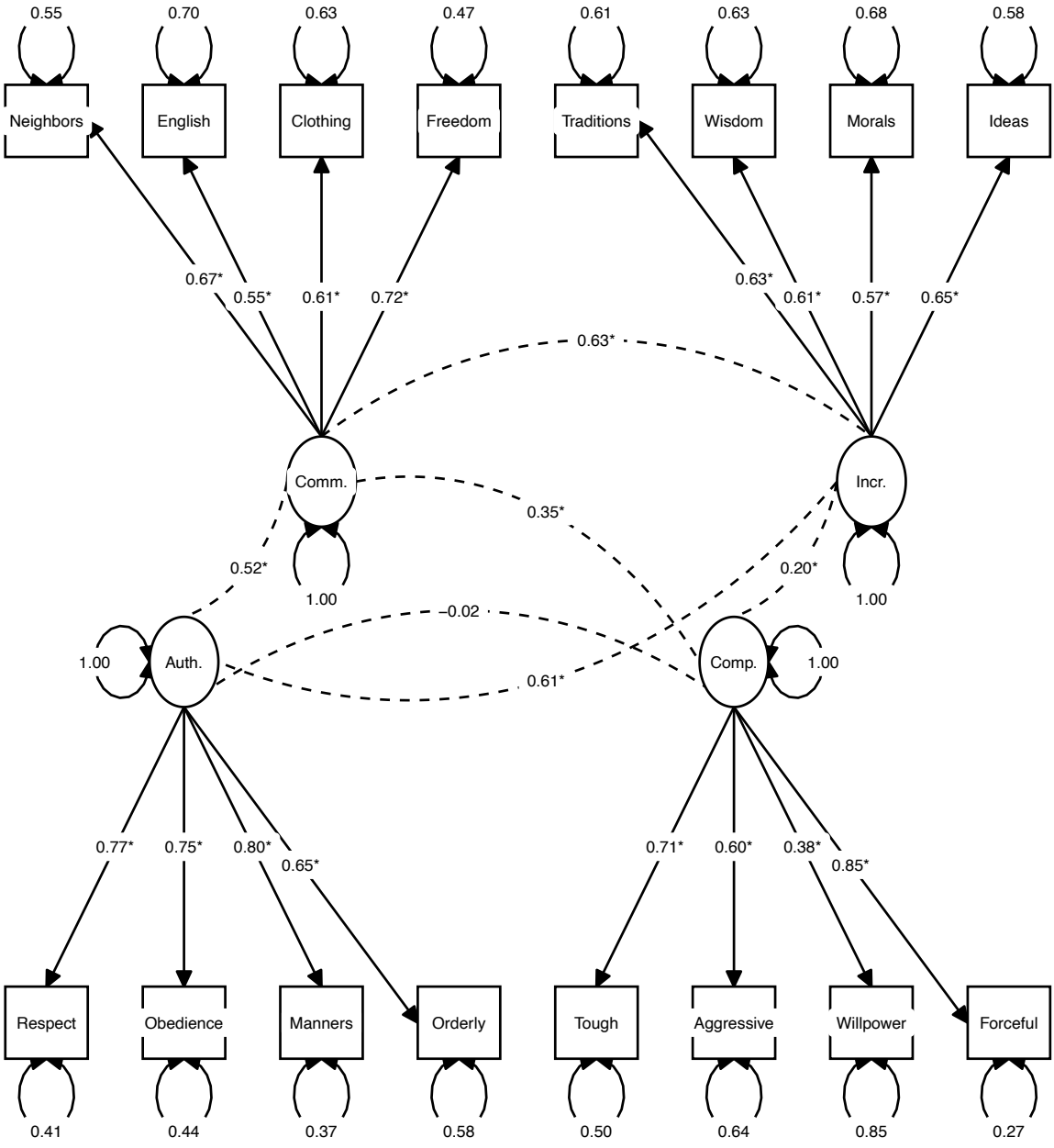
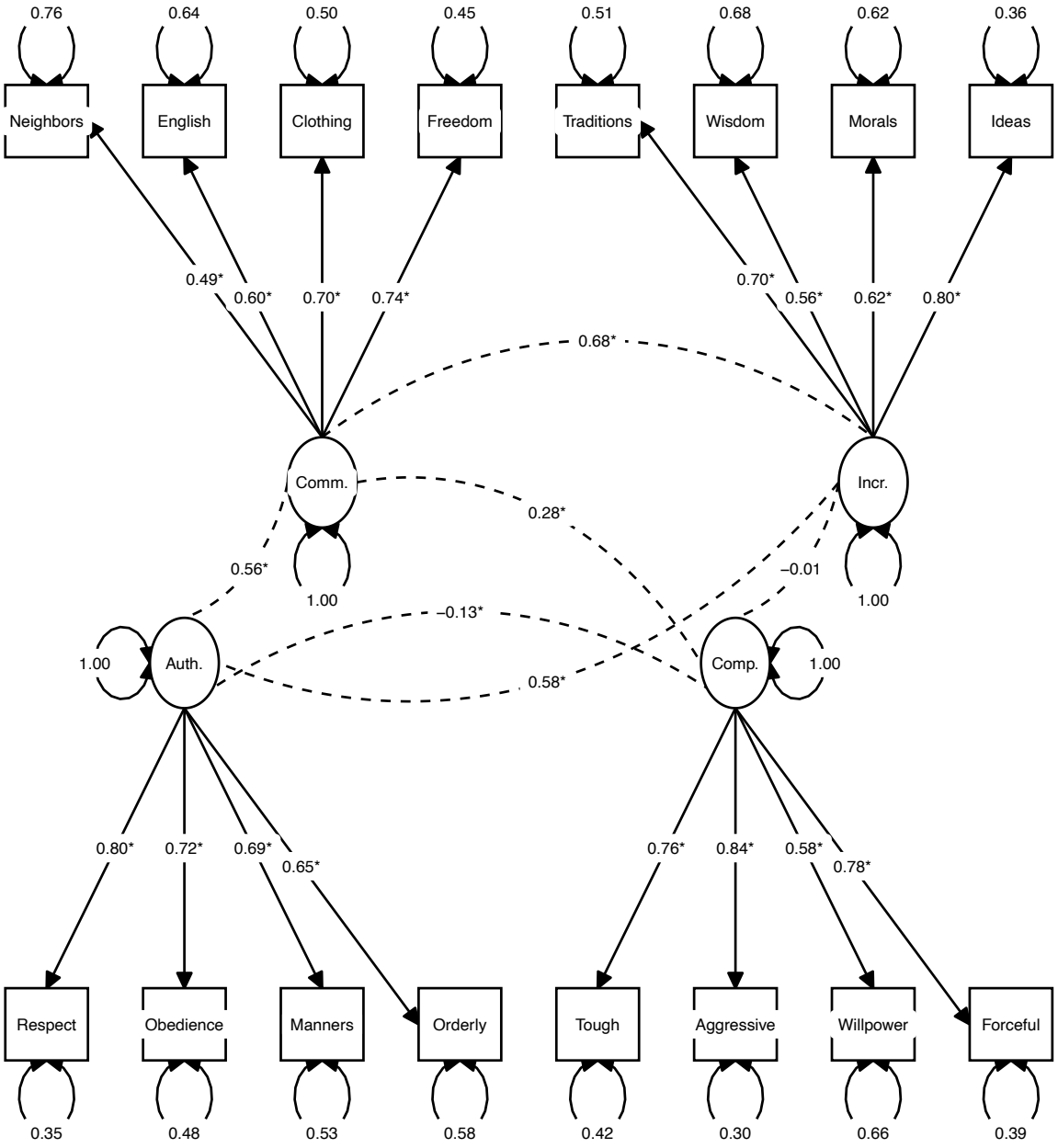


Figure 3: United Kingdom Confirmatory Factor Analysis

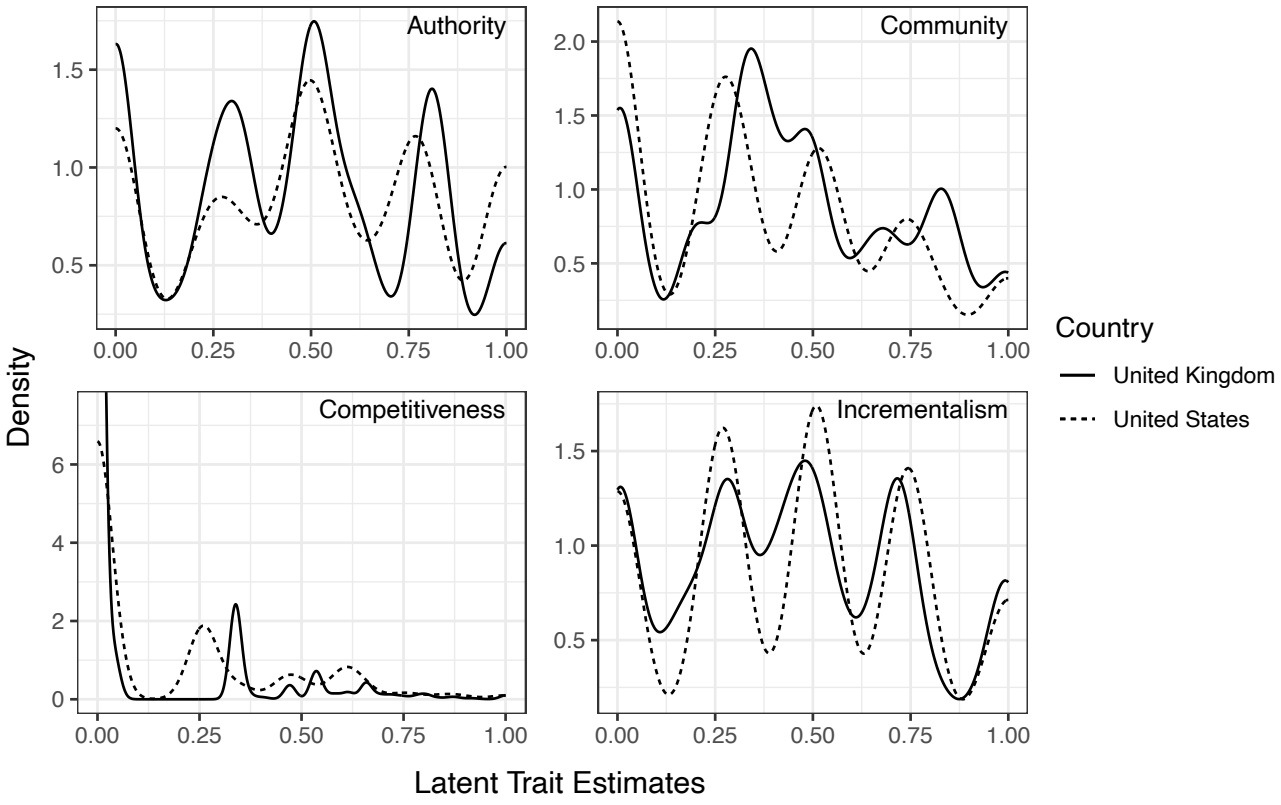


To further interrogate these relationships, we create respondent-level measures of worldview by estimating item response models.[5] Figure 4 plots the kernel density of each

[5] More information on their estimation appears in the Supplementary Information.

dimension in both the United States (dotted line) and United Kingdom (solid line). All dimensions are similarly distributed across contexts, with slight differences appearing in each. For example, we find American respondents more likely than British respondents to inhabit the highest end of the authority scale, and somewhat less likely to inhabit the low end of the community scale. Scores on the competitiveness dimension are extremely low in both countries, with competitive responses especially rare among British respondents. Lopsided distribution notwithstanding, we show below that this dimension acts as a strong predictor of key variables of interest.

Figure 4: Kernel Density Plots of Latent Worldview Dimensions



Worldview and Issue Preferences

If the worldview dimensions have comparable meanings across country context, their relationships with issue preferences in the same domain ought to be similar across country context. We explore three domains. The first is economic (the traditional left-right cleavage), where we expect Burkean incrementalism to play the central explanatory role. Informing Burke's preference for limited government was his belief that time-tested traditions and conventions had demonstrated their wisdom, making only incremental departures from the status quo most appropriate. The second domain is cultural (support for immigration). We designed the community dimension to capture people's preference for living among those who think, sound, and dress like them. Increased immigration ought to be an affront to those who believe the ideal community should be homogeneous. The third domain is support for Covid-19 mitigation, which is neither clearly economic nor clearly cultural. This lack of clarity about issue type provides the multidimensional worldview paradigm an opportunity. The associations we find between Covid-19 preferences and the worldview dimensions will indicate whether its foundation for preferences are more like those of traditional left-right issues or cultural ones.

Unfortunately, the specific questions asked in the US and UK surveys are not the same. In the US, we measured economic attitudes using the average score on four items asking about government's role in the economy. In the UK, we created our dependent variable from responses to five similar, but more broadly gauged, items. We measured support for immigration in the US as the average score on three items measured on four-point scales, with items asking about attitudes toward arresting those who cross the border without documentation, building a wall on the US-Mexico border, and separating families

who cross the border without documentation.[6] In the UK, the measure is a single item that asks whether the UK should allow many more or many fewer immigrants, with responses arrayed on an eleven-point scale. The economic and immigration dependent variables in the UK were asked in Wave 20 of the BES panel (fielded June 2020). As for Covid-19 preferences, Wave 21 of the British Election Study included nine yes/no questions about steps government might take to address the pandemic, such as school and business closures, mask mandates, stay at home orders, and fining those who failed to follow the rules. Our US survey asked similar questions about a slightly different array of restrictions.[7] We apply panel-corrected survey weights provided by the BES to account for the longitudinal data structure.

The first two columns in Table 2 present the results for the worldview dimensions based on OLS models regressing economic attitudes on worldview, party identity, and demographic controls.[8] The next two columns are for immigration attitudes, with the last two columns Covid-19 mitigation.[9] The results follow the pattern we forecasted for both size of the economic and immigration domains. Starting with the former, the effect of incrementalism is by far the largest in both the US and UK, with its coefficient estimate about twice as large as the next biggest one in both. In the UK, competitiveness has the second largest effect, while in the US it is the community dimension. We suspect the larger

[6] Full item wordings are available in the Supplementary Information.

[7] A full list of item wordings and details on the item response models used to combine them appear in the Supplementary Information.

[8] The specific demographics are race, gender, age, education, and income.

[9] Full model output for all six models appears in the Supplementary Information.

relative effect of community in the US models owes to the extreme racialization of government programs in the US. Indeed, many Americans equate government spending with spending on welfare, a program perceived as one that disproportionately benefits people of color (Gilens 1999). That authority exerts no impact on economic policy preferences in either country is consistent with Hetherington and Weiler's (2009) findings that the importance of the "authoritarian" worldview emerged as a fault line only after the culture war issues became central.

Table 2: Worldview and Issue Attitudes Across Country Contexts

	Economic		**Immigration**		**Covid-19**	
	United Kingdom	*United States*	*United Kingdom*	*United States*	*United Kingdom*	*United States*
Authority	-0.008	0.010	0.132*	0.082*	0.070*	0.134*
	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.021)
Community	-0.001	0.094*	0.345*	0.243*	0.030	0.022
	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.021)
Competitiveness	0.041*	0.041*	0.022	0.159*	-0.037*	0.040*
	(0.012)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.020)
Incrementalism	0.090*	0.177*	0.097*	0.193*	-0.076*	-0.176*
	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.022)
R^2	0.257	0.280	0.378	0.514	0.058	0.206
Adj. R^2	0.251	0.275	0.373	0.510	0.050	0.200
Observations	2199	2367	2096	2367	2097	2367

Note: *p < 0.05. Models are OLS. Variables are unit-normalized. Results for control variables are presented in the Supplementary Information.

Turning to immigration in the third and fourth columns in Table 2, all four worldview dimensions exert statistically significant effects in the US and three of the four do in the UK. Community, as expected, has the largest effect among the worldview dimensions in both countries. In the US, competitiveness and incrementalism exert effects that are a bit smaller than community's, with the influence of authority about half their size and a third

that of community. In the UK, authority and incrementalism have substantial effects, but they are less than half the size of community's. Competitiveness has no effect in the British context.

Moving to Covid-19 mitigation preferences, our analysis is more exploratory. People could view this domain as either economic or cultural. Based on which dimensions have substantial impact on preferences, it can help reveal the lens through which citizens are considering the issue. If incrementalism exerts especially large effects, for example, it would suggest that a willingness to support new regulations depends on how wise people think it is to embrace change in general, which is more in keeping with how they think about economic issues. If community proves especially important, it would suggest that concerns about outsiders are driving preferences, reasoning more consistent with cultural, GAL-TAN disagreements. The relationship between authority and Covid-19 preferences also bears attention in this case. The direction of its effect on mitigation preferences may have implications for what concept the desirable qualities in children index is tapping, a point to which we return below.

We find that the effects of incrementalism and authority, respectively, are by far the largest in both the US and UK, exerting roughly the same size effect relative to each other. Preferences for Covid-19 mitigation do not appear to have a strong cultural basis, as the community dimension fails to approach statistical significance in either context. The most arresting finding, however, is the large positive association between the authority dimension and support for Covid-19 policies in both the US and UK. Those who believe in deference to hierarchical authority are much *more* likely to embrace mitigation than those who are less.

This finding casts some doubt on whether the child-rearing index measures authoritarianism. At least in the US, its hypothesized effect should have been negative, with

authoritarian followers mimicking the direction of their authoritarian leader. Donald Trump, the most authoritarian-style American political leader in recent history, loudly opposed the range of mitigation recommendations from public health professionals. Moreover, the intersection of being authoritarian and anti-mitigation was never clearer than when armed and mask-less protesters invaded the Michigan state house in May 2020 to express their opposition to mitigation mandates with the business end of a gun, as Trump cheered them on via Twitter. Yet the estimated effects for authority carry the same (positive) sign in both the US and UK and have roughly the same magnitude. This would suggest that the chaos those scoring high in authority were looking to impose order on was the death and dislocation wrought by Covid, not the welter of new rules and regulations governments were considering.[10]

In sum, we have demonstrated in several ways the cross-national validity of the four worldview dimensions. The individual survey items we devised to capture each worldview dimension yield similar factor structures across contexts; the factors underlying each set of items—representing worldview dimensions—yield comparable inter-correlations in each country, and each worldview dimension exerts predictable, similar effects in the same issue domain across countries.

[10] It is easy to forget that majorities of Republicans often supported mitigation proposals (Tausanovitch and Vavreck 2021). High Republican support may result from those scoring high in authority are both a bulwark of the Republican Party and, as we have shown here, highly supportive of mitigation.

Worldview, Issue Salience, and Institutional Context

We turn next to the most central attitudes in citizen's political belief systems—self-reported (symbolic) ideology and party identification. Because we use clearly pre-political items to measure worldview, we treat it as causally prior to ideology and party (see also Engelhardt, Feldman, and Hetherington 2021). To mitigate concerns about endogeneity, we model the political variables as a function of worldview measured either months or years earlier in the panel study. In addition, we extend our theory by testing our hypothesis that worldview's influence on politics is context-dependent in two important ways, namely, based on issue salience and institutional differences.

Ideology and Issue Salience

In light of what we know about how the average citizen understands and cognizes politics, what people mean when they report where they stand ideologically is murky (e.g. Kinder and Kalmoe 2017). The multidimensional treatment of worldview allows us to test the strength of associations between the various dimensions and ideology, which can shed some light on which life lessons citizens are drawing on when choosing ideological labels for themselves. Does a symbolic attachment to the left or right have to do with their general approach to life regarding their preferences for authority and order, the proper degree of community diversity, support for only incremental changes, or the balance between competition and cooperation? Or, as we expect, does it depend on a mix of all four, with the relative importance of each influenced by the political salience of issues that plausibly animate them?

The most appropriate data to test our thinking is the BES panel. The data from Wave 19 were collected in December 2019, when Brexit was by far the most salient issue in

British politics. Waves 20 and 21 asked the same ideological self-placement item as Wave 19 and were collected in June 2020 and May 2021, respectively. By then, Covid-19 had assumed center stage.[11] Such a change in issue salience ought to affect the weights that the various worldview components exert on ideological self-placement. The results from the immigration model from the UK above suggest that the association between community and ideological self-placement might ebb after Covid-19 replaced immigration atop the issue agenda. The central importance of incrementalism to Covid-19 mitigation preferences suggests its association with symbolic ideology might have increased with the change in salience.[12]

To test our hypothesis about worldview and issue salience, we regress self-reported ideology in Waves 19, 20, and 21 on the worldview dimensions, party identification, and a host of demographic covariates, measured in Wave 19 and presented in the Supplementary

[11] As evidence that the salience of Brexit declined and Covid-19 surged over time, consider the following evidence from weekly surveys conducted by YouGov (n.d.). In December 2019, when wave 19 of the BES was in the field, 63 percent of Britons identified Brexit as one of the most important issues facing the country, the largest percentage for any issue. In the months that Waves 20 and 21 of the BES were conducted, only 40 percent in June 2020 and 26 percent in May 2021 identified Brexit as among the most important problems. By contrast, the most commonly identified issue in June 2020 and May 2021 was the country's health, with 61 percent and 52 percent of respondents, respectively, mentioning it as among the most important issues facing the country.

[12] Less clear to us is whether the impact of authority should increase as well. Its effect in the Covid-19 equations is on par with incrementalism's but carries the opposite sign.

Information. Self-reported ideology is measured on an eleven-point scale ranging from the political "left" to the political "right."

Table 3: Ideology and Worldview Over Time

	Dependent variable:		
	Ideology		
	December 2019	June 2020	May 2021
Authority	0.074*	0.097*	0.076*
	(0.013)	(0.019)	(0.018)
Community	0.129*	0.131*	0.119*
	(0.013)	(0.019)	(0.019)
Competitiveness	0.071*	0.067*	0.088*
	(0.011)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Incrementalism	0.076*	0.087*	0.119*
	(0.013)	(0.019)	(0.018)
Observations	3,697	1,930	1,857
R2	0.541	0.518	0.536
Adjusted R2	0.539	0.514	0.532

Note: *p < 0.05. Models are OLS. Variables are unit-normalized. Results for control variables presented in the Supplementary Information.

Table 3 reports the results. Consistent with expectations, we do find a marked increase in the association between incrementalism and ideology. The increase of 0.043 in the OLS coefficient between December 2019 and May 2021 is statistically significant (p = 0.029), suggesting that we can be quite confident that an increase did occur. Although the association between ideology and community dipped, as expected, it did not change by enough to have much confidence that it is not just statistical noise. This suggests that the residue of the years-long Brexit struggle remains central to Britons' ideological self-placement even in the face of the massive upheaval caused by Covid-19 (Hobolt, Leeper,

and Tilley 2021; Sobolewska and Ford 2020). The associations for ideology with authority and competitiveness, respectively, nudged up slightly over time but neither increase is statistically meaningful.

Party Identification and Institutional Context

Last, we turn to the relationship between party ID and worldview. We expect all worldview dimensions to be associated with support for more politically conservative parties relative to more liberal parties. However, worldview might also map onto differences within party groups, not just between them. The data from the UK, with its "two-party-plus" system, allows us to test this hypothesis in a way not possible in the US. We fit multinomial log-linear models of self-reported party identification in each country and control for the same demographic covariates as above except, of course, party identification, which is the dependent variable.[13] In the US, we model the choice as between Democrat, Independent, and Republican, classifying leaners as partisans and using Democrat as the reference category. In the UK, we include regional parties (Plaid Cymru and Scottish National Party) in the model but reserve the presentation of their coefficient estimates for the Supplementary Information, focusing here on only national parties. Because most UKIP identifiers had moved to the Brexit party by 2019, leaving only 0.9 percent UKIP identifiers in our data, we combine identification with one of these two parties into a single category, as their agendas were similar.

Tables 4 and 5 display the results. All four worldview dimensions are associated with party identification in both countries, suggesting that each contributes independently and

[13] Full model output can be found in the Supplementary Information.

providing further evidence of the value of approaching worldview multidimensionally. Focusing first on the American case in Table 4, the parameter estimates for incrementalism and community are much larger than that of authority, the dimension used in studies of partisanship and worldview in the past.[14] The especially large association between incrementalism and the choice between being a Republican or Democrat suggests that a preference for approaching change gradually and preserving time-honored traditions remains the central fault line between America's major parties, although party identification's association with a preference for community homogeneity is also enormous.[15]

[14] Although not shown here, estimating the model without the three new dimensions returns a substantially larger coefficient for authority (0.55, statistically different from the authority coefficient in Table 3 at $p < 0.001$), suggesting that previous studies using this variable to predict party ID may suffer from omitted variable bias and overestimate the impact of authority on party ID.

[15] Relative to other variables in the model, presented in the Supplementary Information, the magnitudes of all the dimensions' associations with party are impressive. Save racial identification, no other coefficient estimate is as strongly related to Republican party identification as the worldview dimensions. This lineup includes those variables representing the types of fault lines typically drawn in the contemporary American party system, such as age and education. Strikingly, education is not a significant predictor of party identification in the presence of measures of worldview in our model, providing further credence to our argument that worldview is an orientation acquired early in one's life that likely informs downstream decisions such as university attendance and party identification.

Table 4: Party ID and Worldview in the United States

	Dependent variable:	
	Independent	Republican
Authority	-0.016	0.191*
	(0.068)	(0.063)
Community	0.167*	0.516*
	(0.067)	(0.061)
Competitiveness	0.139*	0.120*
	(0.062)	(0.059)
Incrementalism	0.355*	0.810*
	(0.069)	(0.065)
Observations	2,367	2,367

Note: *p < 0.05. Party reference category: Democrat. Model is multinomial log-linear. Variables are unit-normalized. Results for control variables presented in the Supplementary Information.

We observe similar patterns at work in the United Kingdom, but, with more parties than in the US, its context offers a richness that the US's cannot. We array the parties ideologically from left to right in Table 5, with Labour the reference category. As expected, the coefficients for all worldview dimensions carry a positive sign for each of the right party identities (Conservative, Brexit, and UKIP), with most statistically significant. When it comes to the choice between the two largest parties (Labour and Conservative), incrementalism and community are especially strong, which is similar to the US choice between Democrats and Republicans.

Also noteworthy, the coefficients are somewhat larger for the Brexit/UKIP category than for Conservative. These two parties primarily compete on the GAL-TAN dimension (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002; Hooghe and Marks 2018), and within that dimension, they are particularly focused on immigration and the EU—issues that, as we have shown

above, seem to activate all worldview dimensions. Both UKIP and Brexit are motivated by protecting the UK's national character, with the former's concern primarily immigrants and the latter's EU encroachment on national sovereignty over a wide variety of issue domains. Both have implications for the community dimension. Competitiveness is also very relevant to these two issue areas. Those scoring high in competitiveness may be most prone to perceive immigration as forcing Britons to compete for jobs or housing, making the Eurosceptic parties especially attractive. In particular, the Brexit Party argued that supranational regulations were holding the country back, and that the UK could do better by striking out on its own—to compete rather than to cooperate. Finally, the changes wrought by increasing numbers of immigrants and increasing control of the EU over national affairs clearly conflict with the incrementalist desire for slow and steady change. That might encourage them to find the far right even more attractive than the center right.

Table 5: Party ID and Worldview in the United Kingdom

	Dependent variable:					
	Brexit/UKIP	Conservative	Green	LD	PC	SNP
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Authority	0.198*	0.173*	-0.341*	-0.310*	-0.447	0.056
	(0.094)	(0.046)	(0.115)	(0.069)	(0.341)	(0.101)
Community	0.774*	0.623*	-0.230	-0.083	-0.342	0.050
	(0.095)	(0.047)	(0.120)	(0.071)	(0.356)	(0.104)
Competitiveness	0.330*	0.168*	-0.024	-0.045	-0.188	0.126
	(0.073)	(0.043)	(0.106)	(0.065)	(0.354)	(0.085)
Incrementalism	0.447*	0.344*	-0.156	0.091	-0.008	-0.135
	(0.091)	(0.046)	(0.119)	(0.070)	(0.341)	(0.108)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	8,727.599	8,727.599	8,727.599	8,727.599	8,727.599	8,727.599

Note: *p < 0.05. Party reference category: Labour. Model is multinomial log-linear. Variables are unit-normalized. Results for control variables presented in the Supplementary Information.

In examining worldview's effects among partisans on the political left, only the authority dimension exerts an impact. That it does so gives further pause about whether authoritarianism is a good conceptual match with the desirable qualities in children index. The negative and significant effect on authority for both the Green and Liberal Democrat choice relative to Labour indicates that the less authority minded are more likely to identify with the niche left parties than the major left party. Given that scholars have identified authoritarianism as a characteristic those on the political right disproportionately possess, that we are even considering its impact on the left seems strange. However, ours are not the first findings that indicate the authority dimension's influence within the political left.

In a rare use of the desirable qualities battery outside the US, Hetherington and Weiler (2018) find that those who score lower in authority were far more likely to vote for the Green Party over the Social Democrats in the 2017 German elections. In addition, the authority dimension was predictive of Democratic presidential primary voting in both 2008 (Hetherington and Weiler 2009) and 2016 (Wronski et al. 2018). It strains credulity to think that Hillary Clinton in the US, the Labour Party in 2019 Britain, and the Social Democrats in 2017 Germany offered authoritarian platforms that appealed to highly authoritarian voters. A more plausible interpretation of why people who identify with left parties chose Clinton, Labor, and Social Democrats is that all represent the establishment left, in contrast to outsiders like Bernie Sanders, Barack Obama (in 2008), and the Greens in Britain and Germany. To those disposed toward the left for other reasons, perhaps the desirable

qualities in children scale taps a preference for the kind of order that the establishment delivers, not the package of opinions and behaviors connected with authoritarianism.

Discussion

We have sought to extend a different understanding about the foundation of public opinion. The lessons people learn from ordinary life experiences allow people to develop a worldview, which they can use to inform their political beliefs. Unlike the lessons that might help a person develop a political ideology, the lessons that help people construct a worldview can be passed along easily from parent to child, regardless of whether the parent has any interest in politics at all. When circumstances arise, people can deploy their worldview to make sense of the political positions they ought to take and which political party best reflects their philosophy about life. Our view suggests that ordinary citizens are not quite the blank slate that traditional theories of opinion formation suggest. People possess a framework of understanding the world that elite cue-giving fits into. Elites do not have to create that framework for them.

In addition, we find evidence that the political manifestation of people's worldview is multidimensional, with the dimensions applying similarly in the American and British context. For the most part, the measurement strategy produces similar distributions of responses and a similar clustering of factors. The four dimensions mostly have similar associations with policy preferences like immigration and Covid-19 mitigation across country context. However, we find important differences as well. Differences between the American and British party systems produces a pattern of results that differs when it comes to party identification. Factors that can only divide Republicans from Democrats in the US, owing to its two-party system, also distinguish supporters within party groups in the UK.

Among those factors is one that favors hierarchical authority and order over self-exploration, which we and many others measure using a four-item scale about desirable qualities in children. The measure is often dubbed one of authoritarianism, but our results suggest authoritarianism might not be the appropriate concept for the measure. In the UK, we find that the measure distinguishes party choices among citizens on the political *left*. We suspect this is because, on the left, establishment choices likely appeal to those who value order and hierarchy. Because establishment figures and parties tend to occupy the center-left of the political spectrum, those who favor self-expression find them less attractive than far-left upstarts promising to upend the existing arrangements and do things differently. At a minimum, our results suggest that the measure operates differently among those who identify with left parties compared with those who identify with right parties.

Our analysis of Covid-19 mitigation preferences across country context provides further evidence that the child-rearing battery likely may not measure authoritarianism, specifically. Given the centrality of the leader-follower dynamic in the conceptual understanding of authoritarianism, it would seem highly irregular if authoritarian followers took, on average, the exact opposite position of their preferred leader on the most central issue of the day. Yet, we find that is exactly what happened in the US. Despite the fact that, in the US, an inarguably authoritarian-style leader opposed all these measures, those scoring higher were more supportive of mitigation than those scoring low. Authority carried the same sign in the UK as in the US, suggesting to us that those scoring high likely thought mitigation rules might impose some order on the chaos produced by the pandemic.

Our longitudinal analysis of worldview's influence on self-reported ideology in the UK also speaks to a growing debate in the public opinion literature. We have theoretically positioned our worldview dimensions causally upstream from political attitudes, but other

scholars have argued that the opposite might be true—that ideology and sociopolitical context shape supposedly stable traits like personality (Bakker, Lelkes, and Malka 2021), political values (Connors 2020), and moral foundations (Hatemi, Crabtree, and Smith 2019). We push back on this assertion. We measure worldview at a single point in time and associate these worldview scores with ideology over three waves of the BES, observing substantial and theoretically predictable changes in the effect of incrementalism on ideology. We believe this finding reinforces our theoretical positioning of worldview as a generationally transmitted, largely stable influence on political attitudes.

Competing Interests

The authors declare none.

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