

Ideologically Incongruent Authoritarianism:

Understanding Liberal Right-Wing Authoritarians and Conservative Left-Wing Authoritarians

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Abstract

Ideologically incongruent authoritarians – liberal right-wing authoritarians and their counterpart conservative left-wing authoritarians – represent an important yet understudied group. What underlies the incongruence displayed by incongruent authoritarians? We present four conceptual frameworks for understanding this question: Psychological Ambivalence, Rigidity of the Right, Religion-Specific Authoritarianism, and Ecological Threat. We examined each of these frameworks using data from 14 studies and over 9,000 participants. Findings offer modest support for all four frameworks, but no framework on its own comprehensively accounts for incongruent authoritarianism. What is clear, however, is that ideologically incongruent authoritarians in the U.S. comprise a meaningful category with predictable differences from both their fellow non-authoritarian ideologues and their counterpart congruent authoritarians. As such, this work advances our current understanding of authoritarianism, provides unique insight into the psychology of incongruent authoritarians, and contributes to the ongoing asymmetry debate in political ideology.

Ideologically Incongruent Authoritarianism: Understanding Liberal Right-Wing Authoritarians and Conservative Left-Wing Authoritarians

What does it mean when an ideological liberal scores high in right-wing authoritarianism? At first glance, it may be tempting to dismiss the convergence of liberalism and right-wing authoritarianism as measurement error. Perhaps people who score as liberal right-wing authoritarians are merely inattentive participants who misread the authoritarianism questions or misunderstood the term “liberal.”

We argue, however, that liberal right-wing authoritarians – here, along with their counterpart conservative left-wing authoritarians, referred to as *ideologically incongruent authoritarians* – are appreciably more than measurement noise. Although the concept on its surface appears paradoxical, seemingly incongruent authoritarianism comprises quite a bit of the historical research on authoritarianism across cultures (e.g., Bilewicz et al., 2017; De Regt, Mortelmans, & Smits, 2011; Grigoryev et al., 2022; McFarland et al., 1992, 1993, 1996; Reese, 2012; Todosijević & Enyedi, 2008). Thus, at a minimum, it is important to put assumptions about incongruent authoritarians to the empirical test.

In this paper, we first define our conceptualization of “ideologically incongruent authoritarians” and lay out the reasons why it is important to study this group. We then present four possible frameworks for understanding incongruent authoritarians, data related to each framework consisting of 9,000 participants across 14 samples, and discuss how these data fit into each framework.

Defining Ideologically Incongruent Authoritarianism

Ideology can mean many things, ranging from the most specific (e.g., views on specific political issues or candidates) to the broadest level (e.g., self-identification as liberal or conservative). Indeed, different aspects of ideology often come into conflict within individuals. A person may be liberal on one dimension and conservative on another.

One aspect related to ideological belief is authoritarianism: The degree that persons want authority figures to rule their political opponents with an iron hand. Because authoritarianism involves support for some authority figures and not others, authoritarianism is inevitably bound up with domain-specific ideological content (see Conway et al., 2021, for a discussion). Thus, by *ideologically incongruent authoritarianism* we mean that aspects of one's stated ideology seem to conflict with aspects of one's stated authoritarianism. Broadly speaking, an ideologically incongruent authoritarian is (a) someone who prefers politically liberal ideology yet also wants politically conservative authority figures to rule with an iron hand, or (b) someone who prefers politically conservative ideology yet also wants politically liberal authority figures to rule with an iron hand.¹

While ideology can conceptually be analyzed at any level of analysis, we focus on comparing measures of self-identification as "liberal" and "conservative" with standard ideology-leaning authoritarianism questionnaires. This is for three reasons. (1) First, currently little data exist that specifically attempts to understand ideologically incongruent authoritarians. Given that, ideological self-identification measures provide a good starting point for understanding the convergence of seemingly mis-identified authoritarians. (2) Second, the more specific and varied our base measurement of ideology, the more challenging comparisons across samples become. While delving more deeply into those important nuances will certainly prove useful for unpacking specific theories in the future, we first wanted to capture a big-picture view of incongruent authoritarians. (3) Third, the primary puzzle presented by incongruent authoritarians is the seeming contradiction in their own beliefs. That backdrop highlights the value of allowing participants to self-identify their own ideological liberal/conservative leaning, rather than researchers imposing those labels on specific issues from the outside (e.g., someone who holds positions labeled "conservative" in the view of the researcher is a "conservative"). Arguably

¹ As we'll discuss later, it is not necessarily incongruent to the person holding those views. In fact, it is possible that the incongruence is more perceived from the outside than real – an issue we return to.

the surest way to get an overall picture of participants' conservative versus liberal identity is to ask them directly. If we use one subset of beliefs to determine conservative leanings, it is possible that subset is not particularly important or representative to participants. It is for this exact reason that single-item questions often show greater predictive validity than additive scales where researchers assume the additive items represent the whole (see, e.g., research on job satisfaction, Nagy, 2002).

Why Study Ideologically Incongruent Authoritarians?

Ideologically incongruent authoritarians are at a crossroads of two important psychological phenomena: Liberalism/conservatism and authoritarianism. As such, studying people who appear to have conflict between their identified ideology and their authoritarianism score is practically and theoretically important in multiple ways.

At a practical level, it is important to study this group to ground the two constructs in empirical reality as opposed to hypothetical assumptions. To the degree that ideology and authoritarianism are presumed to add something independent of each other, it is important to understand what each adds and at what points they overlap. For example, authoritarianism as a construct is supposed to capture something beyond *mere* ideology as such. Assuming that a liberal high in right-wing authoritarianism is either measurement error or, contrarily, merely a conservative, necessarily assumes that right-wing authoritarianism and conservatism measures are identical. While some have functionally treated them that way (see, e.g., Jost et al., 2003) – a perspective we cover in more detail below – such an approach basically removes all value from authoritarianism as a conceptual or methodological tool separate from typical ideology measures. But it is highly improbable that all ideological positions are the exact representation of their authoritarian counterparts. One can conceptually hold political identity X with or without wanting authority figure Y to dogmatically enforce X from the top down. As such, it is worth

exploring more fully what happens when people seem to hold political identity X and yet also hold authoritarian beliefs pointing in the opposite direction of X.

Second, work outside of the U.S. has almost exclusively focused on a group that could be described as incongruent authoritarians: Russians on the political left who score high on right-wing authoritarianism measurements (e.g., Bilewicz et al., 2017; De Regt, Mortelmans, & Smits, 2011; Grigoryev et al., 2022; McFarland et al., 1992, 1993, 1996; Reese, 2012; Todosijević & Enyedi, 2008). Early scholarship observed positive correlations between authoritarianism and support for Marxist-Leninist ideology (McFarland et al., 1992, 1993) and pro-communist ideology (McFarland et al., 1996). More recently, six separate studies corroborated these earlier findings in a comprehensive examination of authoritarianism in the modern Russian context using RWA and values of politically neutral, conservative, and liberal Russians (Grigoryev et al., 2022). Conway et al. (2021) detail research in other left-wing contexts (e.g., Germany, Poland, Hungary) that provides similar conclusions. This body of evidence suggests that incongruent authoritarians are already an important sector of society to study if we want to have a deeper understanding of the psychology of authoritarianism from individual, group, and cross-cultural perspectives. This requires systematic investigation of incongruent authoritarians in the United States and elsewhere, and the present research provides an important starting point for this endeavor.

Finally, we can learn quite a bit about both ideology and authoritarianism by isolating incongruent authoritarians and comparing them to other groups. Different theoretical perspectives on ideology and authoritarianism, outlined below, imply different hypotheses about what we would expect this group to look like, and thus we gain knowledge by more carefully studying them.

Four Possible Frameworks

What underlies the incongruence displayed by incongruent authoritarians? How do they differ from congruent authoritarians or members of their own ideological group that do not show incongruent authoritarianism? We present four frameworks for understanding these questions. Notably, although we test some aspects of these frameworks in our present study, we do not claim to provide a complete or full test of each framework. Rather, here we provide a set of initial tests of each framework.

Ambivalence

The first explanation is based on psychological ambivalence. It is possible that ideologically incongruent authoritarians are simply less committed to their ideological liberal or conservative identity, and as such find it easier to shift towards an authoritarianism that is not their own base identity.² If this framework is accurate, we would expect evidences of ambivalence – such as less commitment to party candidates, less reported enthusiasm for their own ideological labels, and increased discrepancy between different measurements of ideology. Importantly, this framework would expect that ambivalence would explain other effects: If incongruent authoritarians are at a crossroads of identity ambivalence, much of their subsequent divergence from low authoritarians who share their ideology should be a function of their heightened ambivalence. We test this explanation using discrepancy in reported ideology scores as a marker of ambivalence.

Conservatism

A second explanation is based on the long-assumed connection between psychological conservatism and authoritarianism: It is possible that *both* types of incongruent authoritarians represent

² This explanation may seem superficially related to the measurement error explanation; but it is nonetheless psychologically very different. Ambivalence explanations assume that, for example, someone reporting as conservative means something actually *conservative*; but they are less certain of their commitment to conservatism. They are thus not merely measurement noise because of a lack of understanding of the questions; their scores on conservatism and authoritarianism are both meaningful. Unlike the measurement error hypothesis, we would expect that there would still be a predictable effect of authoritarianism in the expected direction for incongruent authoritarians; but it would be more variable and weaker.

ideological conservatism. In this framework, liberal right-wing authoritarians are “conservatives in disguise” – they self-report liberalism for socio-cultural (or other) reasons but are functionally conservatives (see Jost et al., 2003; Saunders & Jost, 2023). Conservative left-wing authoritarians are, in this view, simply another instantiation of how conservatives can be authoritarian across multiple domains.³

In general, this viewpoint is in danger of recategorizing incongruent categories to those in alignment with a rigidity-of-the-right framework, thus functioning as a semantic tautology (“if it is authoritarian, it is conservative”). However, the case of the incongruent authoritarian allows for a testable, non-tautological prediction to emerge from this framework. Specifically, this framework predicts a difference in the effects of authoritarianism and ideology on incongruent authoritarians’ attitudes and behaviors: It expects that liberal right-wing authoritarians will be more influenced by their authoritarianism (that is, the “right-wing” part of their attitude set), while conservative left-wing authoritarians will be more influenced by their ideology (again, the “right-wing” part of their attitude set). We test this hypothesis in the present study.

Religiosity

A third explanation is based on religiosity. Conceptually and methodologically, authoritarianism is infused with religious content (e.g., Saunders & Jost, 2023). As a result, one framework for understanding incongruent authoritarians is that they diverge from others who share their ideology primarily on religious values. In this framework, conservative left-wing authoritarians would be especially non-religious and liberal right-wing authoritarians would be especially religious, as this provides grounds

³ This could also be construed as a form of measurement error, as liberals (who are actually conservative) misplace themselves on the liberal/conservative dimension. However, it isn’t merely random noise – it is systematic error. Further, this group can still be a discernable category in this view that is different from those who show no incongruency. Thus, this is either a very specific form of measurement error or something different entirely. Either way, it is different from people who merely provide random noise on one or both questionnaires.

for wanting a religious authoritarian figure to overbear the non-religious (liberal right-wing authoritarians) or a non-religious authoritarian figure to overbear the religious (conservative left-wing authoritarians). Further, this framework would expect that this difference in religion would explain many of the other ways that incongruent authoritarians differ from their similar ideological counterparts. We test this explanation in the present work.

Ecological Threat

A fourth explanation is based on ecological threat. Research shows that perceived threats are one of the most pervasive predictors of authoritarianism (see, e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; Conway et al., 2021, 2023; Crawford, 2017; Duckitt et al., 2010; Feldman, 2003; Jost et al., 2003; Peterson et al., 2005). Thus, an ecological threat model expects that one of the reasons incongruent authoritarians exist is that they feel threatened. This threat could occur at a general level, or they may specifically perceive a threat that an opposing authoritarianism can solve.

Importantly, however, theoretical models and research have further suggested that some ecological threats are more politicized than others. Thus, the ideological match between the ecological threat and a desired ideological outcome is vital in understanding the interface between authoritarianism and threat (Conway et al., 2021b; Conway et al., 2022). Most pertinent to our present case, modern ecological threat models would predict that ideologically incongruent authoritarians would be as likely as any other authoritarian to show the threat-authoritarianism relationship on general threats that are not viewed as especially politically motivated, but more variable outcomes for threat domains that have direct ideological implications in the population at hand.

For example, considering the probability that one's place of residence will have earthquakes is not particularly liberal or conservative. But it *is* related to authoritarianism more broadly, because that kind of ecological threat tends to be associated with increased authoritarianism (see Conway et al.,

2023). As such, for this kind of ‘geographical ecological threat,’ ecological threat models would expect that incongruent authoritarians would appear similar to their congruent counterparts as threat probabilistically increases the likelihood of authoritarianism across the ideological spectrum. However, for the many sets of variables that carry greater ideological baggage (e.g., COVID threat in the U.S., measurements of dangerous world that focus on religious or climate change variables), the outcomes would be much more variable. In these more politicized cases, the relationship of threat to incongruent authoritarianism would depend largely on the degree that the threat matched the incongruent authoritarian’s own desires for change. Consider perceived COVID threat. If a person who is otherwise conservative feels very threatened by COVID, they may be more likely to endorse left-wing authoritarianism because they perceive that LWA will help alleviate that specific fear.

The clearest prediction from this framework is that general, largely non-politicized threats should predict incongruent authoritarianism in much the same way as congruent authoritarianism. However, the more politicized a threat is, the more exploratory analyses on ecological threats become, because in the case of highly politicized threats, the threat would only increase incongruent authoritarianism if there were a specific ideological match for a given individual. We use ecological threats that prior work empirical suggests are less (generalized geographical stress) or more (COVID threat, belief in a dangerous world) politicized (Conway et al., 2021; Conway et al., 2023).⁴

Overview of Methodological Strategy

Conceptually, our goal in the present study is to compare ideologically incongruent authoritarians to congruent authoritarians, non-authoritarians in their own ideological group, and non-authoritarians in their opponent ideological group. Using this conceptual four-group design across a set

⁴ The ecological threat model is context dependent. As such, unlike the religiosity and ambivalence models, it does not predict a broad mediating effect of threat on other variables.

of 14 samples,⁵ we compare ideologically incongruent authoritarians to these three other groups on (a) variables relevant to the four proposed frameworks and (b) other variables conceptually related to authoritarianism: Ambivalence, Religiosity, Threat, Voting Behavior, Outgroup Negativity, and Self-Identification as Authoritarian. Our goal was to cast a wide net of relevant attitudes and behaviors to better understand the incongruent authoritarian at a broad level. Further, in each sample half of the participants completed a measure of right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), while the other half completed a parallel measure of left-wing authoritarianism (LWA; for validity evidence for both questionnaires, see Conway et al., 2023). This allows us to directly test the degree that liberal incongruent authoritarians differ from conservative incongruent authoritarians.⁶

Although one of our two ideology scales and both authoritarianism scales are continuous, we opted to dichotomize both variables using prior researchers' standards for scientifically-valid cutoff points (Conway et al., 2012, 2018; Van Heil et al., 2006). Dichotomizing continuous variables loses variability and yet is useful when (1) one of the focal groups at the intersection of the dichotomy is small and (2) good conceptual reasons exist for dichotomizing (for discussion and recent exemplars of dichotomization of continuous scales, see Brint et al., 2022; Stefana et al., 2023; Vivion et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2022). In our case, the primary group we are measuring – incongruent authoritarians – does indeed comprise a comparatively small group. Conceptually, ideological incongruency is not directly represented by any main effect or interaction between the continuous variables. Further, a failure to use a conceptually-defensible cut-off point could lead to a “sleight-of-hand” problem (see Conway et al.,

⁵ All data in this study comes from projects published elsewhere or are in various stages of production (see Table 1). However, none of those projects evaluated incongruent authoritarianism, and thus all results reported in this paper are completely novel.

⁶ It is worth noting that we do not consider a liberal who scores low on LWA or a conservative who scores low on RWA to be “ideologically incongruent.” That is because we view it possible for someone to be in favor of liberal or conservative principles and yet *not* hold to authoritarian means of advancing those principles. Thus, it is methodologically biased to lump those participants into an “ideologically incongruent” cell, because doing so predetermines the conclusion without allowing a clean look at their data.

2018) whereby it is hard to know if effects are genuinely due to the persons scoring on the upper part of the scale, or are simply relative effects that do not truly capture the ideologically incongruent authoritarian. As a result of these considerations, we opted to dichotomize the scales used to measure ideologically incongruent authoritarians.

To isolate ideologically incongruent authoritarians, we created a category for participants who either “leaned right” or “leaned left” (following Conway et al., 2012, 2018) *and* who scored greater than the 50th percentile on the ideologically incongruent authoritarian measurement (following Van Heil et al., 2006). This means that participants who (1) scored above the midpoint for conservatism and in the top half of the LWA measurement or (2) scored above the midpoint for liberalism and in the top half of the RWA measurement were considered ideologically incongruent authoritarians.⁷

Against this backdrop, the first part of our analytic strategy was a series of straightforward planned comparisons. We compared incongruent authoritarians with congruent authoritarians, non-authoritarians in their own ideological group, and non-authoritarians in their opponent ideological group. Although we present data for all three comparisons, we focus our attention on the two most relevant comparison groups for ideologically incongruent authoritarians: Those who shared their

⁷ Van Heil et al. (2006) presented two cutoffs: a normal and more extreme standard. We here use the normal standard. Originally, we had started with their more extreme standard and a similarly extreme standard for liberals/conservatives, where we used those in the 80th percentile or higher as “very high authoritarians” and those in the 75% on the liberal/conservatism scale. However, we instead settled on Van Heil et al’s and Conway et al’s (2012; 2018) less rigid standard (top 50%) for two reasons. (1) Conceptually, a person who scores in the upper 50% on both the LWA scale and conservatism – or both the RWA scale and liberalism – is a meaningful categorical anomaly. (2) Empirically, by discarding a great deal of data unnecessarily, considering only the top 20%/25% held too little power and occasionally led to hard-to-interpret results due to extremely small cell sizes. As a result, the decision was made to analyze data in the manner reported in the text. This fits with our conceptual goals, maximizes power, and is in line with prior research for both variables (Conway et al., 2012, 2017; Van Heil et al., 2006). However, analysis using the more extreme standard, while differing in a few cases due to smaller *n* in key cells, generally yielded a similar pattern to that reported in the text with the full sample. Thus, the main storylines in the present manuscript are largely unaltered by this alternative strategy.

ideology but were lower in authoritarianism, and those who were similarly high in authoritarianism but differed in ideology.⁸

These two comparisons allow us to estimate the contributions of authoritarianism and ideology to a given DV. To the degree that ideologically incongruent authoritarians show (1) a large difference on a given DV from those who are lower in authoritarianism but share their ideology (e.g., conservative high-LWA with conservative low-LWA), this suggests their score on that DV is likely driven more by their authoritarianism. On the other hand, to the degree that ideologically incongruent authoritarians show (2) a large difference on a given DV from those who differ in ideology but are equally high in authoritarianism (e.g., conservative high-LWA with liberal high-LWA), this suggests their score on that DV is driven more by ideology. As a result of this, large differences from ideology similar/authoritarianism different categories similar represent the effect of *authoritarianism*, while large differences from ideology different/authoritarianism similar categories represent the effect of *ideology*. We use this conceptual framework to compare the effects of ideology and authoritarianism for the incongruent authoritarian.⁹

Methods

⁸ This project was not pre-registered. However, we transparently report all relevant analytic decisions in this manuscript. Method codebook and data are available at https://osf.io/efjdw/?view_only=41fa2ae914d041dbb99ec973ad1424b4

⁹ We also initially computed separate 2-way interactions on authoritarianism (high or low) X ideology (leans left or leans right) for LWA and RWA separately. Although not a direct test of the effect of incongruence, this initial step allowed us to make inferences about the forces behind incongruence in ways that account for the comparisons across cells. A main effect of authoritarianism and a main effect of ideology, with no interaction, suggests that incongruent authoritarians were likely equally influenced by their authoritarian leaning and their ideological leaning – and thus found themselves “in between” on the relevant variable. An effect of authoritarianism with no main effect of ideology and no interaction suggests a leaning towards their authoritarian score, while a main effect of ideology with no other effects suggest a leaning towards their ideology score. An interaction effect, however, suggests that incongruent authoritarians are potentially a unique category. However, although meaningful, these results essentially mirror those presented in the main text and thus provided redundant information. For brevity’s sake, we have put them in the supplements for the interested reader.

Participants

The original pool of participants was drawn from 10,360 participants across 14 studies (see Table 1 for details). From this pool, participants who did not complete either a political ideology measurement or an authoritarianism measurement ($n = 8$) were dropped from analyses, as were participants who scored directly at the midpoint of the 1-9 political conservatism scale ($n = 1312$). This resulted in a total sample of 9,041 for main analyses.

Authoritarianism

Participants in each study completed either an RWA or an LWA measurement, but not both. We used the entire set of 14 studies to produce a cutoff point for those “high” versus “low” in authoritarianism. Participants above the median were assigned to a high authoritarian category; participants below the median were assigned a low category.

Ideology

We used two different measurements of ideology. First, consistent with other research (e.g., Conway et al., 2012; Conway et al., 2018), we used a continuous measurement of self-reported ideology to categorize participants as either “leaning right” or “leaning left.” This continuous ideology measure combined two 1-9 scale items anchored by liberal anchors on one end (liberal/democrat) and conservative anchors on the other end (conservative/republican) and with a clear conceptual midpoint (5). These scores are highly correlated (generally $r > .88$) and thus combined into a single measure. Higher scores on this ideology measure thus indicate more conservatism, such that scores above 5 represent a conservative leaning and scores below 5 represent a liberal leaning. Unlike authoritarianism, our ideology scale has a clear conceptual mid-point on a 1-9 scale, where scores greater than 5 leaned conservative and scores less than 5 leaned liberal. Thus, to capture participants who self-identified as

liberals or conservatives, we followed previous norms and considered those who scored below 5 as leaning left/liberal, and those who scored above 5 as leaning right/conservative.

For our second measurement, a subset of participants ($n = 9,127$) completed a forced-choice measurement of political ideology that allowed participants to assign themselves to liberal, conservative, or other options. 6,087 participants assigned themselves to either liberal ($n = 3899$) or conservative ($n = 2188$) categories using this measurement.

Results using these two different methods of constructing a dichotomous ideology score produced largely similar results. For brevity, we here focus on the first ideology measurement because doing so increased our participant number by almost 3,000 participants. Results from the forced-choice measurement can be found in the supplements.

Demographic Measures: Age and Biological Sex Assigned at Birth

Participants completed measurements of self-reported age and self-reported biological sex assigned at birth.

Potential Mediation Measures

Ideological Ambivalence. 9,127 participants completed scores for both measurements of ideology. To create an ambivalence score based on consistency in self-reported ideology, we first converted the forced-choice measurement into a scale where 0 = liberal, 1 = moderate/other/independent, and 2 = conservative. We then converted both this score and the continuous measure of political ideology to z-scores, and subsequently computed the absolute value of the difference between the scores. High scores on this *political ambivalence* measure mean that participants showed a discrepancy between their reported ideological leanings on the two measurements; low scores mean that they reported similar scores on the two measures.

Religion. 6,681 participants completed one of two different religion items (or both). Both items were anchored on a 1-9 scale. The first item was “I believe in God” ($n = 5996$); the second item was “My attitude towards organized religion is:” ($n = 2612$). For participants who completed both items ($n = 2157$), the two items were highly correlated ($r = .72$). We thus created a cumulative “religion” score which was either the mean of the two items (for participants who completed both) or the score for the item completed by participants (for participants who only completed one item). Each item was further analyzed separately, and results are essentially identical to that presented for the cumulative religion score.

Additional Dependent Measures

Voting Behavior: 2016 Election Support for Trump/Clinton. 1,775 participants were asked from 2016-2020 who they voted for in the 2016 election between Trump and Clinton, with four options (Clinton, Trump, Other, None/Cannot Say). We converted these to two binary measures: Support for Trump (1 or 0) and Support for Clinton (1 or 0).

Threat: Geographical Ecological Stress. 4,115 participants completed items relevant to their perceived level of ecological stress in their local geographical environment. These threats were drawn from prior work on the effect of ecological stress on the emergence of cultural beliefs related to authoritarianism and freedom (e.g., Beall et al., 2016; Conway et al., 2014; Conway et al., 2017; Conway et al., 2019; Conway et al., 2021; Fincher & Thornhill, 2012; Kitayama et al., 2006, 2010; Murray & Schaller, 2010; Oishi et al., 2017; Van de Vliert, 2013; Van de Vliert & Conway, 2019). These included a question each for *natural disaster prevalence*, *harsh climate prevalence*, *mountain (i.e., frontier topography) prevalence*, *pathogen prevalence*, and *general ecological stress*. For example, participants

were asked “*I feel the primary area where I live has a lot of disease.*”¹⁰ Here we use the summary *Geographical Ecological Stress* score used in prior work (Conway et al., 2022). While showing a slight conservative leaning, this overall measurement is generally conceptually and empirically less ideological than the other threat measurements used in the present study (see Conway et al., 2022).

Threat: Perceived COVID Threat. 1,465 participants completed six items concerning how threatened or worried they were about COVID-19, for example: “Thinking about the coronavirus (COVID-19) makes me feel threatened” (see Conway et al., 2023). This threat leans consistently empirically liberal (Conway et al., 2021).

Threat: Belief in a Dangerous World. 421 participants completed one of two versions of the Belief in a Dangerous World scale that represented ideologically laden conservative and liberal threat scales. Half of the participants received the original scale directed at conservative focused threats (e.g., such as the destruction of the world by God or the preponderance of crime), here referred to as the BDWC. Half of the participants completed a modified version of the *BDW* scale, here referred to as the BDWL, designed to focus on threats in domains more harmonious with the ideological focus of liberals: Environmental concerns, lack of medical care, and fighting wars. See Conway et al. (2023) for details.

Outgroup Negativity. 1,086 participants completed one of two measurement types related to outgroup negativity: (a) Modern Racism (randomly assigned to a scale focused on ethnic minorities or religious minorities; see Conway et al., 2018) or Negative Perceptions of Religious African Americans and Jews who support Israel (combined standardized outgroup negativity measurement; see Conway et al., 2023). Scores were standardized within-study.

¹⁰ These measurements were taken pre-COVID 19, and as such the disease item is not as politically-charged as the COVID threat measurements.

Self-Identification as Authoritarian. 4,282 participants completed one item pertaining to self-identification as an authoritarian anchored on a 1-7 scale (“Generally speaking, I believe I am strongly authoritarian”; see Conway et al., 2021). Scores were standardized within-study.

Table 1: Sample Details

| | <i>N</i> | Sample | Characteristic | |
|-----------|----------|--------------------|--|----------------------|
| | | | Dependent Measures | Source |
| Study 1 | 441 | <i>MTurk</i> | Religion (Both), Voting | Conway et al. (2023) |
| Study 2 | 417 | <i>MTurk</i> | Religion (Both), Voting | Conway et al. (2023) |
| Study 3 | 4855 | <i>MTurk</i> | General Ecological Stress, Religion (Believe in God), Authoritarian Self- Identification | Conway et al. (2021) |
| Study 4 | 1084 | <i>MTurk</i> | Perceived COVID Stress, Voting | Conway et al. (2023) |
| Study 5 | 421 | <i>MTurk</i> | Belief in a Dangerous World, Religion (Both), Voting | Conway et al. (2023) |
| Study 6 | 533 | <i>MTurk</i> | Religion (Both), Voting | Conway et al. (2023) |
| Study 7 | 350 | <i>MTurk</i> | Voting | Ideology, Age, Sex |
| Study 8 | 271 | <i>MTurk</i> | Outgroup Negativity (African-Americans and Jews), Voting | Conway et al. (2023) |
| Study 9 | 169 | <i>MTurk</i> | Outgroup Negativity (African-Americans and Jews), Voting | Conway et al. (2023) |
| Study 10a | 178 | College Student | Outgroup Negativity (Modern Racism) | Conway et al. (2018) |
| Study 10b | 147 | <i>MTurk</i> | Outgroup Negativity (Modern Racism) | Conway et al. (2018) |

| | | | | |
|----------|-----|--------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Study 11 | 294 | <i>MTurk</i> | Religion (Both), Voting | Conway & McFarland (2019) |
| Study 12 | 202 | <i>MTurk</i> | Authoritarian Self- Identification, Religion (Both), Voting | Conway et al. (2021) |
| Study 13 | 632 | <i>MTurk</i> | Perceived COVID Threat | Zubrod & Conway (in progress) |

Note: n's are from original samples prior to exclusions (see main text).

Results

Preliminary Analyses: Age and Biological Sex Assigned at Birth

Descriptive results for age and biological sex assigned at birth are presented in Table 2. A clear pattern for incongruent authoritarians emerged for age: For both LWA and RWA, incongruent authoritarians were the youngest category, especially for liberal high-RWA persons. In both cases, high authoritarian categories were younger than low authoritarian categories, but this drop was larger for incongruent authoritarians.

Table 2: Age and Biological Sex Assigned at Birth by Authoritarianism Type, Authoritarianism Score, and Ideology

| | Low LWA/Lib | Low LWA/Cons | High LWA/Lib | High LWA/Cons | | Low RWA/Lib | Low RWA/Cons | High RWA/Lib | High RWA/Cons |
|------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|--|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Age | 38.20 | 40.10 | 37.00 | 36.00 | | 37.80 | 38.90 | 33.80 | 39.30 |
| Male Perce | 0.42 | 0.38 | 0.45 | 0.59 | | 0.40 | 0.63 | 0.49 | 0.51 |

Note: Ideologically Incongruent Cells in **Bold**.

Results for biological sex assigned at birth revealed a somewhat more complicated pattern. For LWA, by far the highest percentage of males was in the incongruent category. This was not the case for RWA. However, this was partially because liberals were more likely to be female than conservatives, as both LWA and RWA showed an interaction in the same direction: regardless of authoritarianism type, the percentage of males increased more from low-to-high authoritarianism for incongruent authoritarians.

These results suggest that on average, incongruent authoritarians tend to be younger than other categories, and more likely to be male after accounting for the fact that a higher percentage of liberals are female.

Potential Mediators: Ideological Ambivalence and Religiosity

We first present analyses that two of our frameworks expect to be mediating variables for other effects: Ideological Ambivalence and Religiosity. We then present analyses for our remaining DVs, compare the effects of ideology and authoritarianism across all measured DVs, and do mediation analyses using ambivalence and religiosity as mediators.

Ideological Ambivalence. As can be seen in Table 3, for LWA, consistent with an ambivalence framework, incongruent conservatives were higher than the other three groups in ideological ambivalence; while for RWA, there was a similar (but more nuanced) pattern.

Specifically, planned comparisons revealed that, in the LWA condition, incongruent conservative left-wing authoritarians were significantly more ambivalent than liberals also high in LWA ($t[2025] = 11.01, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = 0.64, LCI = .52; UCI = .76$), conservatives low in LWA ($t[1452] = 8.13, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = .50, LCI = .38, UCI = .62$), and liberals low in LWA ($t[1168] = 7.65, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = .49, LCI = .36; UCI = .61$).

In the RWA condition, incongruent liberal right-wing authoritarians were statistically significantly greater on ideological ambivalence than their liberal low-RWA counterparts ($t[2554] = 10.17, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = .45, LCI = .36, UCI = .54$). However, they did not differ significantly from either conservative

persons high in RWA ($t[1952] = 1.17, p = .240$; Cohen's $d = .06, LCI = -.04, UCI = .15$) or conservatives low in RWA ($t[907] = .34, p = .732$; Cohen's $d = .03, LCI = -.13, UCI = .18$).¹¹

On balance, these results suggest that ideologically incongruent authoritarians do show some signs of probabilistically higher ideological ambivalence, in each case showing a significant likelihood of being more identified with the opposing ideology than their low-authoritarian counterparts who share their ideology. This provides partial support for the ambivalence hypothesis. However, this support is not especially overwhelming; further results reveal that this ambivalence effect pales in comparison to the effect of their ideology (absolute ideology effect size d 's > 2.8 , absolute authoritarianism effect size d 's $< .63$). Indeed, these results reveal that incongruent authoritarians, while showing signs of ambivalence, are by and large consistent in their reports of ideological leanings. Nevertheless, the differences in ideological ambivalence do provide reason to suspect that it could potentially mediate some of the other effects. We explore this hypothesis in more detail in mediational analyses below.

Religiosity. As can be seen in Table 3, planned comparisons in the LWA condition revealed incongruent conservative left-wing authoritarians were significantly more religious than liberals also high in LWA ($t[1668] = 12.60, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = .82, LCI = .69, UCI = .95$). However – and importantly – they were also significantly *less* religious than conservatives low in LWA ($t[1190] = -8.40, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = -.57, LCI = -.70, UCI = -.43$). Interestingly, conservative left-wing authoritarians showed a religiosity mean very similar to liberals low in LWA ($t[1007] = 0.86, p = .390$; Cohen's $d = .06, LCI = -.08, UCI = .20$).

¹¹ To better understand this ideological ambivalence, we also computed parallel analyses using the categorical measurement of ideology as the DV. Paired with the ambivalence measure, this allows us to get a larger picture of incongruent authoritarians. For both LWA and RWA, consistent with ambivalence results, incongruent authoritarians showed more of a rise in their opposing ideology (compared to low-authoritarian persons) than congruent authoritarians. However, this simpler story belies an important descriptive truth: Both liberal and conservative incongruent authoritarians showed low overall identification with the opposing ideology, and indeed generally showed congruence with their ideology score and not with their authoritarianism score. Liberal right-wing authoritarians largely reported themselves as categorically liberal (91%; low-RWA liberals = 99%), while conservative left-wing authoritarians largely reported themselves as categorically conservative (85%; low-LWA conservatives = 98%). See Supplements for more details.

In the RWA condition, incongruent liberal right-wing authoritarians were statistically significantly greater than their liberal low-RWA counterparts ($t[2174] = 21.31, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = 1.04, LCI = .94, UCI = 1.15$). Interestingly, they were also significantly more religious than conservative persons low in RWA ($t[749] = 8.11, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = .68, LCI = .51, UCI = .85$), and although descriptively close in religiosity to high RWA-conservatives, this difference was still statistically significant ($t[1577] = -5.46, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = -.29, LCI = -.39, UCI = -.18$).

Table 3: DVs by Authoritarianism Type, Authoritarianism Score, and Ideology

| | Low LWA/Lib | Low LWA/Cons | High LWA/Lib | High LWA/Cons | Low RWA/Lib | Low RWA/Cons | High RWA/Lib | High RWA/Cons |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Religion | 5.62 | ***7.20 | ***3.50 | 5.80 | ***3.57 | ***4.60 | 6.43 | ***7.14 |
| Ideological Ambivalence | ***0.43 | ***0.45 | ***0.40 | 0.64 | ***0.36 | 0.50 | 0.52 | 0.51 |
| Voting: | | | | | | | | |
| Vote Trump | ***0.07 | ***0.75 | ***0.04 | 0.59 | ***0.01 | ***0.73 | 0.13 | ***0.73 |
| Vote Clinton | ***0.63 | ***0.04 | ***0.69 | 0.17 | ***0.74 | ***0.09 | 0.58 | ***0.06 |
| Threat | ***_ | | | | | | | |
| Geographical Ecological Stress | 0.14 | ***-0.09 | ***0.02 | 0.47 | ***-0.1 | ***-0.23 | 0.12 | 0.10 |
| Covid Threat | 4.98 | *4.32 | ***5.19 | 4.78 | ***5.46 | **4.19 | 5.01 | ***4.41 |
| Dangerous World (Cons) | 0.09 | 0.42 | ***-0.32 | 0.37 | ** -0.59 | ***-0.74 | 0.31 | **0.9 |
| Dangerous World (Lib) | -0.39 | -0.14 | 0.30 | -0.02 | ^0.12 | ***-1.56 | -0.32 | ***0.20 |
| Negative Outgroup Perceptions | -0.09 | ***-0.69 | ***0.68 | -0.04 | ***-0.29 | 0.17 | 0.06 | 0.24 |
| Authoritarian Self-Identification | 0.09 | ***0.27 | ***-0.35 | 0.87 | ***-0.49 | ***-0.22 | 0.30 | ***0.57 |

Note: Ideologically Incongruent Cells in **Bold**. Sign. tests are planned comparisons from bold cells. ^p<.07; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

These religiosity results RWA results suggest that liberals who are high in RWA are especially religious, and thus their right-wing authoritarianism is in part a function of that variable. They may be political liberals for reasons other than religiosity – potentially falling in a category of religious liberals (see, e.g., Hirsh et al., 2013). This supports the religiosity framework for understanding incongruent authoritarians.

The LWA scale reveals a similar story, but with less of a comparative change for the incongruent group. Conservatives high in LWA are, like high-LWA liberals, less likely to be religious than their low-LWA conservative counterparts. Yet they are still appreciably more religious than their high-LWA liberal counterparts. Although the RWA and LWA patterns diverge somewhat, the LWA pattern too suggests that part of the reason that conservatives are high in LWA is because they are less religious, and therefore feel less concerned about an authority figure challenging their religion. In this case, however, the mean score for this incongruent group is still quite high ($M = 5.8$, above the midpoint for religiosity), which suggests very narrow (and not overwhelming) support for the religion-domain authoritarian hypothesis.

Summary Transition

On balance, data relevant to two of our opening frameworks suggest that both domain-specific religiosity and ideological ambivalence account for part of the reason that incongruent authoritarians are incongruent. Ambivalence and religiosity are both roughly equally important for conservatives high in LWA; religiosity takes on greater importance for liberals high in RWA. However, with the exception of religiosity for liberals high in RWA, the authoritarianism effects are generally moderate in size, revealing that a lot of variance remains unexplained. Later, we explore the degree that religiosity and ambivalence account for authoritarianism effects as predicted by each model. First, we present additional data on these effects.

Threat

Geographical Ecological Stress. As seen in Table 3, in the LWA condition, incongruent conservative left-wing authoritarians reported significantly more ecological stress than conservative low-LWA persons ($t[742] = 8.97, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = .75, LCI = .58, UCI = .92$). They were also reported significantly more ecological stress than liberal low-LWA persons ($t[612] = 9.84, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = .85, LCI = .68, UCI = 1.03$) and their high-LWA liberal counterparts ($t[1097] = 8.22, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = .65, LCI = .49, UCI = .81$).

In the RWA condition, incongruent liberal right-wing authoritarians reported statistically significantly more ecological stress than liberal low-RWA persons ($t[1075] = 5.77, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = .36, LCI = .24, UCI = .49$). They also reported significantly more ecological stress than conservative persons low in RWA ($t[439] = 4.40, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = .50, LCI = .27, UCI = .72$). However, unlike incongruent left-wing authoritarians, incongruent liberal right-wing authoritarians did not differ in ecological stress from their conservative right-wing authoritarian counterparts ($t[948] = 0.40, p = .349$; Cohen's $d = .03, LCI = -.10, UCI = .16$).

Despite differences across LWA and RWA, in the main, these results reveal that incongruent authoritarians looked more like their ideologically-opposed authoritarian counterparts than they did ideologically-similar non-authoritarians. This is consistent with one of the clearest predictions from the ecological stress framework: generic, apolitical ecological stress is associated with incongruent authoritarians in much the same way as it is associated with congruent authoritarians.

Perceived Covid Threat. As seen in Table 3, in the LWA condition, incongruent conservative left-wing authoritarians reported statistically significantly more Covid Threat than conservative low-LWA persons ($t[286] = 2.10, p = .018$; Cohen's $d = .28, LCI = .02, UCI = .54$). They did not significantly differ in COVID threat from liberal low-LWA persons ($t[192] = -1.00, p = .320$; Cohen's $d = -.15, LCI = -.44, UCI =$

.14) and showed less COVID Threat than their high-LWA liberal counterparts ($t[408] = 8.22, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = -.33, LCI = -.58, UCI = -.08$).

In the RWA condition, incongruent liberal right-wing authoritarians reported statistically significantly less COVID Threat than liberal low-RWA persons ($t[425] = -3.29, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = -.35, LCI = -.55, UCI = -.14$). They also reported significantly more COVID Threat than conservative persons low in RWA ($t[154] = 2.74, p = .003$; Cohen's $d = .59, LCI = .16, UCI = 1.02$). Incongruent liberal right-wing authoritarians showed more COVID Threat than their conservative right-wing authoritarian counterparts ($t[400] = 3.89, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = .42, LCI = .20, UCI = .63$).

Taken together with the ecological stress results, COVID Threat results reveal a clear pattern. For ecological stress – a largely apolitical measure of ecological threat – incongruent authoritarians tended to look more like their ideologically-opposite authoritarians than their ideologically-similar non-authoritarians. However, for the politically-charged COVID Threat measure, incongruent authoritarians tended to show signs of both their authoritarian leaning and their political ideological leaning – and thus appeared roughly in between those two. In line with their authoritarian leaning, incongruent authoritarians scored significantly higher (for incongruent conservatives high in LWA) or lower (for incongruent liberals high in RWA) than their ideological counterparts; but, in line with their ideological leaning, they also scored significantly lower (for incongruent conservatives high in LWA) or higher (for incongruent liberals high in RWA) than their opposing ideology authoritarian counterparts. This lands them roughly in the middle, showing evidence of both competing psychological sets.

Belief in a Dangerous World. As seen in Table 3, in the LWA condition, incongruent conservative left-wing authoritarians reported statistically significantly more BDW-Conservative only than their high-LWA liberal counterparts ($t[51] = 2.71, p = .005$; Cohen's $d = .87, LCI = .21, UCI = 1.51$). Incongruent conservative left-wing authoritarians did not significantly differ from any of the other cells on BDWC (for

conservative low-LWA persons, Cohen's $d = -.06$, $LCI = -.21$, $UCI = .60$; for low-LWA liberals, Cohen's $d = .31$, $LCI = -.41$, $UCI = 1.01$). Incongruent conservative left-wing authoritarians did not statistically significantly differ in BDW-Liberal from their high-LWA liberal counterparts ($t[27] = -.60$, $p = .535$; Cohen's $d = -.36$, $LCI = -1.56$, $UCI = .84$), from low-LWA liberals ($t[20] = .63$, $p = .556$; Cohen's $d = .39$, $LCI = -.84$, $UCI = 1.61$), or low-LWA conservatives ($t[30] = .23$, $p = .822$; Cohen's $d = .14$, $LCI = -1.05$, $UCI = 1.33$).

In the RWA condition, incongruent liberal right-wing authoritarians reported statistically significantly more BDWC than liberal low-RWA persons ($t[59] = 3.07$, $p = .002$; Cohen's $d = .91$, $LCI = .30$, $UCI = 1.51$) and conservative persons low in RWA ($t[18] = 3.92$, $p < .001$; Cohen's $d = 2.03$, $LCI = .80$, $UCI = 3.21$), but significantly less BDWC than their conservative right-wing authoritarian counterparts ($t[34] = -2.56$, $p = .008$; Cohen's $d = -.87$, $LCI = -1.55$, $UCI = -.16$). Incongruent liberal right-wing authoritarians reported statistically marginally significantly less BDWL than liberal low-RWA persons ($t[70] = -1.51$, $p = .066$; Cohen's $d = -.41$, $LCI = -.93$, $UCI = .12$) and significantly more BDWL than conservative persons low in RWA ($t[21] = 3.07$, $p = .003$; Cohen's $d = 1.69$, $LCI = .48$, $UCI = 2.86$), but significantly less BDWL than their conservative right-wing authoritarian counterparts ($t[43] = -2.32$, $p = .013$; Cohen's $d = -.70$, $LCI = -1.31$, $UCI = -.09$).

Although anomalies exist in these analyses and results have lower power than the others in this manuscript, in the main they tell a clear story. Incongruent conservatives high in LWA tended to show BDW results either closer to their low-LWA conservative counterparts (BDWC) or in between their conservative counterparts and their high-LWA liberal counterparts (BDWL). This pattern was similar for incongruent liberals high in RWA, although the effect of authoritarianism (similarity to high-RWA conservatives) was more in evidence than effects of ideology. This suggests that conservatives high in LWA are so in part because they are more concerned about liberal-focused threats, while liberals high in RWA are so in part because they are more concerned about conservative-focused threats. But this effect is stronger for incongruent liberals than for incongruent conservatives.

Support for Trump/Clinton in 2016 Election

As seen in Table 3, planned comparisons in the LWA condition revealed that ideologically incongruent conservative left-wing authoritarians were significantly less likely to vote for Trump (and more likely to vote for Clinton) than conservatives low in LWA (t 's[684] = -4.12 and 6.21, p 's < .001; Trump Cohen's d = -.37, LCI = -.54, UCI = -.19; Clinton Cohen's d = .55, LCI = .38, UCI = .73). They were also significantly *more* likely to vote for Trump (and less likely to vote for Clinton) than liberals high in LWA (t 's[902] = 23.02 and -13.58, p 's < .001; Trump Cohen's d = 1.98, LCI = 1.79, UCI = 2.17; Clinton Cohen's d = -1.17, LCI = -1.35, UCI = -.99) and liberals low in LWA (t 's[521] = 16.00 and -10.85, p 's < .001; Trump Cohen's d = 1.51, LCI = 1.30, UCI = 1.71; Clinton Cohen's d = -1.02, LCI = -1.22, UCI = -.82).

In the RWA condition, incongruent liberal right-wing authoritarians were statistically significantly more likely to vote for Trump and less likely to vote for Clinton than their liberal low-RWA counterparts (t 's[1075] = 8.62 and -5.27, p 's < .001; Trump Cohen's d = .58, LCI = .44, UCI = .71; Clinton Cohen's d = -.35, LCI = -.49, UCI = -.22). They were also significantly less likely to vote for Trump and more likely to vote for Clinton than conservative persons low in RWA (t 's[405] = -14.04 and 9.23, p 's < .001; Trump Cohen's d = -1.63, LCI = -1.89, UCI = -1.38; Clinton Cohen's d = 1.07, LCI = .83, UCI = 1.31) and significantly less likely to vote for Trump and more likely to vote for Clinton than conservatives high in RWA (t 's[909] = -20.70 and 21.47, p 's < .001; Trump Cohen's d = -1.45, LCI = -1.45, UCI = -1.30; Clinton Cohen's d = 1.50, LCI = 1.35, UCI = 1.66).

Taken together, these results reveal that ideologically incongruent authoritarians voted for their own party's candidate far more frequently than their opposing ideological categories did. Conservative left-wing authoritarians still voted for Trump in greater numbers than liberals did, and ideologically incongruent liberal right-wing authoritarians also voted for their own party's candidate in strong numbers. However, both incongruent authoritarian groups voted for their own party's candidate

significantly less than their low-authoritarian ideological counterparts. This suggests some effect of both their authoritarianism score and their ideology score, but more so of ideology.

Outgroup Negativity

As seen in Table 3, in the LWA condition, incongruent conservative left-wing authoritarians reported statistically significantly more outgroup negativity than conservative low-LWA persons ($t[172] = 4.13, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = .78, LCI = .40, UCI = 1.16$) and significantly less outgroup negativity than liberal high-LWA persons ($t[215] = -4.63, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = -.85, LCI = -1.22, UCI = -.48$). They did not significantly differ from liberal low-LWA persons ($p = .742$; Cohen's $d = .06, LCI = -.31, UCI = .44$).

In the RWA condition, incongruent liberal right-wing authoritarians reported statistically significantly more outgroup negativity than liberal low-RWA persons ($t[388] = 3.64, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = .42, LCI = .19, UCI = .64$). They did not significantly differ in outgroup negativity from either conservative persons low in RWA or conservative persons high in RWA (p 's $> .159$; conservative low RWA Cohen's $d = -.13, LCI = -.48, UCI = .22$; conservative high RWA Cohen's $d = -.18, LCI = -.42, UCI = .07$).

In summary, outgroup negativity results show that, for both incongruent liberals and incongruent conservatives, they tended to show results reflecting both their ideology and their authoritarianism. However, for incongruent conservatives high in LWA, they were roughly equally affected by their authoritarian leaning and their ideological leaning; while for incongruent liberals high in RWA, they were much closer to their authoritarian counterpart than their ideological counterpart.

Self-Identification as "Authoritarian"

As seen in Table 3, in the LWA condition, incongruent conservative left-wing authoritarians reported statistically significantly more self-reported authoritarianism than conservative low-LWA persons ($t[779] = 7.16, p < .001$; Cohen's $d = .58, LCI = .41, UCI = .74$), and liberal low-LWA persons ($t[638]$

= 11.42, $p < .001$; Cohen's $d = .97$, $LCI = .79$, $UCI = 1.14$), and liberal high-LWA persons ($t[1137] = 17.86$, $p < .001$; Cohen's $d = 1.38$, $LCI = 1.21$, $UCI = 1.54$).

In the RWA condition, incongruent liberal right-wing authoritarians reported statistically significantly more self-reported authoritarian identification than liberal low-RWA persons ($t[1372] = 15.98$, $p < .001$; Cohen's $d = .99$, $LCI = .86$, $UCI = 1.11$) and conservative low-LWA persons ($t[459] = 5.02$, $p < .001$; Cohen's $d = .55$, $LCI = .33$, $UCI = .77$). However, they reported significantly less authoritarian identification than conservatives high in LWA ($t[1005] = -4.18$, $p < .001$; Cohen's $d = -.28$, $LCI = -.41$, $UCI = -.15$).

In summary, incongruent conservatives high in LWA showed the expected identification as authoritarians, even though their high-LWA liberal counterparts did not. Conservatives high in both kinds of authoritarianism showed an increased recognition that they were authoritarian. Incongruent liberals high in RWA, unlike their congruent liberal high LWA counterparts, showed increased recognition compared to low-RWA liberals. This suggests that they can identify authoritarianism in themselves when it is right-wing authoritarianism. However, they also showed significantly less self-identification as authoritarian than their high-RWA conservative counterparts, suggesting that there was nonetheless still a pull of their ideology towards lesser identification.

Summary Comparison of Authoritarianism and Ideology Effects

To get a bigger picture understanding of our data, we further compared the expected effects of authoritarianism and ideology against the reality of ideologically incongruent authoritarians for liberal and conservative incongruent authoritarians separately. Following the logic outlined earlier, we focused on comparing ideologically incongruent authoritarians to (1) those who shared their ideology but were lower in authoritarianism (authoritarianism effect), and (2) those who were similarly high in authoritarianism but differed in ideology (ideology effect).

For ease of comparison, we reverse-scored effects when the expected effect direction was negative (e.g., liberals voting for Trump). To do this, we laid out the direction of the expected effect for both ideology and each kind of authoritarianism (LWA and RWA) separately (see Table 4). We discuss these decisions in more detail in the supplement. Here, it is worth noting that the specific direction assigned to the prediction does not change the strength of the effects – only their expected direction. Had we simply used the absolute value of the effect sizes, the results would have been nearly identical. In fact, in all but two cases this method would have yielded identical signs; as can be seen in Table 5, all but two of the signs for expected effects is positive, and one of the negative effects is nearly zero. Thus, while we believe our approach better captures the data, altering some of the predictions would not appreciably change the emergent story.

Table 4: Expected Effects for Authoritarianism and Ideology

| | <u>Conservatives High in LWA</u> | | <u>Liberals High in RWA</u> | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| | <i>Authoritarianism Effect</i> | <i>Ideology Effect</i> | <i>Authoritarianism Effect</i> | <i>Ideology Effect</i> |
| Religion | High LWA Lower | Conservatives Higher | High RWA Higher | Liberals Lower |
| Ideological Ambivalence | No Expectation | No Expectation | No Expectation | No Expectation |
| Voting: | | | | |
| Vote Trump | High LWA Lower | Conservatives Higher | High RWA Higher | Liberals Lower |
| Vote Clinton | High LWA Higher | Conservatives Lower | High RWA Lower | Liberals Higher |
| Ecological Stress | | | | |
| Geographical Ecological Stress | High LWA Higher | No Expectation | High RWA Higher | Liberals Lower |
| Covid Threat | High LWA Higher | Conservatives Lower | High RWA Lower | Liberals Higher |
| Dangerous World (Conservative) | High LWA Lower | Conservatives Higher | High RWA Higher | Liberals Lower |
| Dangerous World (Liberal) | High LWA Higher | Conservatives Lower | High RWA Lower | Liberals Higher |
| Negative Outgroup Perceptions | High LWA Higher | No Expectation | High RWA Higher | No Expectation |
| Authoritarian Self-Identification | High LWA Higher | Conservatives Higher | High RWA Higher | Liberals Lower |

In Table 5, we report the effect sizes for authoritarianism and ideology effects. We further computed difference scores for each DV within type of authoritarianism measure (authoritarianism effect – ideology effect). Scores at zero represent an equal contribution of both authoritarianism and ideology to the incongruent authoritarians’ score on that DV. Scores above zero represent a greater contribution of authoritarianism; scores below zero represent a greater contribution of ideology.

Table 5: Comparison of Authoritarianism and Ideology Effects for Incongruent Authoritarians By Type

| | <u>Conservatives High in LWA</u> | | | <u>Liberals High in RWA</u> | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| | Authoritarianism Effect | Ideology Effect | Authoritarianism-Ideology | Authoritarianism Effect | Ideology Effect | Authoritarianism-Ideology |
| Religion | ***0.57 | ***0.82 | -0.25 | ***1.04 | ***0.29 | 0.75 |
| Ideological Ambivalence | ***0.50 | ***0.64 | 0.14 | ***0.45 | 0.06 | 0.39 |
| Voting: | | | | | | |
| Vote Trump | ***0.37 | ***1.98 | -1.61 | ***0.58 | ***1.45 | -0.87 |
| Vote Clinton | ***0.55 | ***1.17 | -0.62 | ***0.35 | ***1.50 | -1.15 |
| Ecological Stress | | | | | | |
| Geographical Eco. Stress | ***0.75 | ***0.65 | 0.10 | ***0.36 | -0.03 | 0.39 |
| Covid Threat | *0.28 | ***0.33 | -0.05 | ***0.35 | ***0.42 | -0.07 |
| Dangerous World (Cons) | 0.06 | **0.87 | -0.81 | **0.91 | **0.87 | 0.04 |
| Dangerous World (Lib) | 0.23 | 0.36 | -0.13 | 0.41 | *-0.70 | 1.11 |
| Negative Outgroup | ***0.78 | ***0.85 | -0.07 | ***0.42 | 0.18 | 0.24 |
| Authoritarian Self-ID | ***0.58 | ***1.38 | -0.80 | ***0.99 | ***0.28 | 0.71 |
| TOTAL | 0.47 | 0.96 | -0.44 | 0.59 | 0.43 | 0.15 |

Notes: All effects reversed-scored when necessary so higher scores represent expected outcomes; see text for effect computations.

This comparative strategy yielded some striking similarities across dependent variables. The only topic for which both ideologically incongruent liberals and ideologically incongruent conservatives showed a greater effect of authoritarianism than ideology was the one for which an ecological stress framework would predict a greater pull of authoritarianism: Geographical Ecological Stress. Further, the variables where one might expect a greater pull of ideology – voting intention variables, which are strongly linked to ideology – consistently showed a strong ideological leaning for both types of incongruent authoritarians.

Table 5 also reveals a clear overall difference between the two types of incongruent authoritarians in a manner consistent with the conservatism framework outlined in the introduction. Incongruent liberals high in LWA tended to show more effects of their right-wing authoritarianism (that is, the “conservative part”), whereas incongruent conservatives high in LWA tended to show more effects of their ideology (also the “conservative part”). Thus, this provides some evidence for the “conservatives in disguise” theory of left-wing authoritarianism.

Two caveats are worth noting. First, for both ideology and authoritarianism, effects tended to be significantly positive for both kinds of effects for both groups. The effect here is relative: Both incongruent liberals and incongruent conservatives tend to show significant effects of both their authoritarianism and their ideology. Second, this relative effect is less a function of differences in authoritarianism (average d for incongruent conservatives = .46, for incongruent liberals d = .59), and more a function of differences in ideology (average d for incongruent conservatives = .96, for incongruent liberals d = .43). Both incongruent liberals and incongruent conservatives showed moderate effects for authoritarianism – showing that in essence, in many ways they function much like their “opposing” authoritarianism score would predict. But conservative incongruent authoritarians were more influenced by their self-identified conservatism than liberal incongruent authoritarians were influenced by their self-identified liberalism.¹²

Mediation Analyses

For mediation analyses, we were interested primarily in understanding the authoritarianism effects presented in Table 5. To examine, we computed indirect effects on the key authoritarianism effect comparisons (high LWA conservatives with low LWA conservatives, and high RWA liberals with low RWA liberals) for each mediator (religiosity and ambivalence) separately, using the PROCESS bootstrapping macro (model 4) with 5,000 samples.

¹² We also explored whether liberals or conservatives tend to show more ideologically incongruent authoritarianism. To evaluate, we computed 2 (Participant Ideology: Liberal versus Conservative) X 2 (Type of Authoritarianism: LWA versus RWA) ANOVAs for authoritarianism as both a continuous and a categorical variable. Both types of analyses revealed similar interactions between participant ideology and type of authoritarianism (interaction F 's > 2850.7, p 's < .001). Descriptive means of the interactions reveal that, although the gaps are large in both cases, there is an even larger gap for between conservatives' and liberals' authoritarianism scores for RWA than for LWA. This is consistent with the previously noted finding that LWA-ideology effect sizes, although large on their own, are generally smaller than RWA-ideology effect sizes (see, e.g., Conway et al., 2018). However, as revealed in the Supplements, both continuous and categorical measurements show this difference due more to a larger gap between liberals and conservatives in congruent authoritarianism (liberals high in LWA, conservatives high in RWA) than a difference in incongruent authoritarianism.

Table 6: Mediation of Authoritarianism Effects for Incongruent Authoritarians

| | Zero- Order | Control for Religion | Religion Indirect Effect | Zero- Order | Control for Ambiv. | Ambiv. Indirect Effect |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| <u>High-LWA/Low-LWA Con.</u> | | | | | | |
| Religion | n/a | n/a | n/a | ***-0.24 | ***-0.22 | ** -0.10 |
| Ambivalence | ***0.20 | ***0.18 | ** 0.01 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Voting: | | | | | | |
| Vote Trump | ***-0.16 | ***-0.15 | -0.07 | ***-0.16 | *-0.10 | ** -0.26 |
| Vote Clinton | ***0.21 | ***0.19 | *0.16 | ***0.22 | ***0.15 | ** 0.39 |
| Ecological Stress | | | | | | |
| Geo. Eco. Stress | ***0.31 | ***0.32 | * -0.04 | ***0.31 | ***0.30 | 0.02 |
| Covid Threat | n/a | n/a | n/a | *0.12 | *0.12 | 0.01 |
| BDW (Cons) | -0.03 | 0.05 | -0.13 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| BDW (Liberal) | 0.04 | 0.17 | -0.41 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Negative Outgroup | **0.26 | 0.18 | ** 0.27 | **0.25 | **0.25 | 0.0 |
| Author. Self-ID | ***0.25 | ***0.26 | -0.04 | ***0.25 | ***0.24 | 0.0 |
| <u>High-RWA/Low-RWA Lib.</u> | | | | | | |
| Religion | n/a | n/a | n/a | ***0.41 | ***0.41 | -0.01 |
| Ambivalence | ***0.16 | ***0.15 | -0.02 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Voting: | | | | | | |
| Vote Trump | ***0.28 | ***0.25 | -0.01 | ***0.21 | ***0.14 | *** 0.37 |
| Vote Clinton | ***-0.17 | ***-0.19 | *0.21 | ***-0.13 | *-0.07 | ** -0.23 |
| Ecological Stress | | | | | | |
| Geo. Eco. Stress | ***0.16 | ***0.17 | * -0.04 | ***0.16 | ***0.14 | ** 0.02 |
| Covid Threat | n/a | n/a | n/a | ***-0.16 | ** -0.14 | -0.04 |
| BDW (Cons) | **0.37 | 0.25 | 0.25 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| BDW (Liberal) | -0.18 | -0.03 | * -0.34 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Negative Outgroup | ***0.40 | ***0.40 | * -0.1 | 0.10 | 0.09 | 0.02 |
| Author. Self-ID | ***0.39 | ***0.35 | 0.03 | ***0.40 | ***0.39 | 0.01 |

*For main and partial effects: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.*

*For indirect effects: **= significant at 99% CI; * = significant at 95% CI*

Results are presented in Table 6. Three primary messages emerged from these mediation analyses. First, most of the indirect effects were small or non-significant. Second, the most consistent set of mediational effects occurred for ambivalence significantly mediating both voting behavior variables

for both kinds of incongruent authoritarians. This suggests that part of the reason that incongruent authoritarians were more likely to vote for the opposing party's candidate is ambivalence about their own political identity. Third, and probably most importantly, most of the significant effects at zero-order remained significant after controlling for each mediator separately – even for the mediators that had indirect effects such as voting behavior. This suggests that neither the religion variable nor ideological ambivalence accounts for very much overall variance in why incongruent authoritarians differ from their ideologically-similar (but low authoritarian) counterparts on the other variables studied here.

General Discussion

The present data show that, in the U.S., ideologically incongruent authoritarians comprise a meaningful category with predictable differences from both their fellow non-authoritarian ideologues and their counterpart congruent authoritarians. They also provide some clues as to what those individuals are like, help advance theory about them, and contribute to the ongoing asymmetry debate in political ideology.

Which Theoretical Framework is Right?

We proposed four possible explanatory frameworks in the introduction. While our methods were not set up to directly compare these explanations against each other, it is worth asking which framework garnered the most evidence.

The answer was clear: All four frameworks received modest support, but no framework on its own can offer a sweeping explanation for incongruent authoritarianism. Consistent with an ambivalence framework, incongruent authoritarians generally showed more evidence of inconsistency in their ideological self-identification. Consistent with a religiosity framework, incongruent authoritarians generally showed evidence that part of their incongruence results from disagreeing with their ideological

counterparts on religion. Yet for both ambivalence and religiosity, these effects did not explain much additional variance in the other variables.

The ecological stress model likewise received modest support. The expectation that geographical stress – a general variable that is less political, and thus should draw out authoritarianism in incongruent and congruent authoritarians alike – would show the greatest relative effect of authoritarianism was generally supported. On the other hand, the relative difference was not overly large (see Table 5), so this support is nonetheless modest. Similarly, the conservative-in-disguise model received qualified support: Both liberal and conservative incongruent authoritarians showed the expected conservative leaning (as evidenced in Table 5), and yet these effects clearly did not explain a great deal of the variance.¹³

Integrative Framework: Moderation Versus Domain-Specific Matching

The present study provides evidence concerning four possible frameworks to explain incongruent authoritarianism. But, given that all frameworks received modest support, what can we say about the bigger picture? Is there a way to integrate these data into a larger framework?

While our data cannot provide a definitive integrative model, they do provide some clues. A first potential method of integrating across the four frameworks tested here is to consider the possibility that incongruent authoritarians will show moderate results on each variable that essentially reflects their conflict. This moderation view suggests that it is not so much a matter of domain-specificity as it is a general conflict across domains. As a result, this view would expect that generally, incongruent authoritarians would be “in between” their authoritarian and ideological counterpart comparison

¹³ In a separate study, we also tested a different framework: Namely, that incongruent authoritarians would be particularly likely to be authoritarian to any authority figure. The primary implication of this framework is that incongruent authoritarians ought to be more likely than other kinds of people to show a tendency towards *all* kinds of authoritarianism. Given how domain-specific authoritarianism is, this framework had a very low *a priori* probability of being correct – and in fact, incongruent authoritarians were nor more or less likely than other categories to hold to both left-wing and right-wing authoritarianism simultaneously.

groups. And our data suggest that is partially the case. A quick glance at Tables 3 and 5 shows that, often, ideologically incongruent authoritarians show fairly equal pull of both authoritarianism and ideology and thus land in the middle of their two comparison groups.

However, this view is also clearly incomplete. There is much theoretically-predicted variability across different domains in whether authoritarianism or ideology shows stronger effects, and incongruent authoritarians generally are not just the simple product of main effect influences of authoritarianism and ideology. Rather, these data suggest a more nuanced view of what comprises incongruent authoritarians that focuses on *ideological match*. Research has suggested that the ideological match between the environment and a desired ideological outcome is vital in understanding issues like perceived threat and authority intervention (Conway et al., 2021b; Conway et al., 2022). This framework thus predicts that the likelihood that incongruent authoritarians will show predictive power of their authoritarianism (versus ideology) score is dependent on how their ideology and authoritarianism match the proposed dependent variable. Because this match is domain- and context-dependent, this ideological match theory predicts a range of outcomes.

Most pertinent to our present case, the ideological match theory would predict very consistent outcomes for very general, largely apolitical drivers of authoritarianism, but more variable outcomes for domains that have direct ideological implications. Indeed, anything predictive of authoritarianism – but less related to ideology – ought to operate similarly on ideologically incongruent authoritarians as any other kind of authoritarian.

There is a danger of tautologically declaring all results as a good fit in with an ideological match perspective *after the fact*, and this variable was not directly measured in the present data. Thus, here we can mostly only speculate. But with that in mind, the partial support for each of the frameworks is suggestive of a larger force at play that cuts across those frameworks. It is quite possible, for example,

that the relative effects of authoritarianism (versus ideology) on incongruent authoritarians are larger for outgroup bias than for voting behavior because part of the reason incongruent authoritarians are authoritarian on the “wrong” side is due to associations with group-based biases more so than party-line voting – they may simply wish for authoritarians to quash other group members in ways that cut across ideological lines. That would occur only if the measured outgroups in question matched their incongruence.

The Asymmetry Debate

Authoritarianism has played a key role in the ongoing debates about the degree that conservatives asymmetrically possess traits (such as dogmatism and rigidity) generally regarded as normatively “bad,” versus the degree those traits are equally distributed across the political spectrum (Clark & Winegard, 2021; Nilsson & Jost, 2022; Saunders & Jost, 2023). Yet comparative tests are often hard to produce. The present data provides a unique addition to this debate by parsing the likelihood that incongruent authoritarians may be “conservatives in disguise.” We find, quite at odds with the view that authoritarianism is symmetrical (Conway et al., 2018), that incongruent authoritarianism does indeed lean conservative: Ideologically incongruent conservatives high in LWA are more influenced by their conservative ideology, and ideologically incongruent liberals high in RWA are more influenced by their conservative authoritarianism.

However, while this evidence does suggest asymmetries, like recent meta-analyses (Houck & Conway, 2019; Costello et al., 2023), it also suggests that the asymmetries are not overly large. Indeed, these data clearly support the idea that both sides have meaningful incongruent authoritarians that are legitimately liberal or conservative; but this tendency is greater among conservatives.

Concluding Thoughts

Incongruent authoritarians are not mere measurement error. While not definitively arguing for one specific theoretical framework, the modest support for all four theories *does* clearly argue for incongruent authoritarians as a meaningful category worthy of future study. The present work provides a starting point for what this group at the crossroads of two vital constructs in the field looks like.

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