Convergence and Divergence in the Study of Ideology: A Critical Review

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Abstract

Dedicated research on ideology has proliferated over the last few decades. Many different disciplines and methodologies have sought to make a contribution, with the welcome consequence that specialist thinking about ideology is at a high-water mark of richness, diversity and theoretical sophistication. Yet, this proliferation of research has resulted in a fragmentation in the study of ideology, producing independent communities of scholars differentiated by geographical location and by disciplinary attachment. This review draws together research on ideology from several different disciplines on different sides of the Atlantic, in order to address three questions that appear to be of deep relevance to political scientists: (1) What do we mean by ideology? (2) How do we model ideology? (3) Why do people adopt the ideologies they do? In doing so, it argues that many important axes of debate cut across disciplinary and geographic boundaries, and points to a series of significant intellectual convergences that offer a framework for productive interdisciplinary engagement and integration.
Introduction

Ideology remains a central concept in the study of politics. In spite of long-standing concerns over the term’s diverse meanings,¹ its potential disappearance or obsolescence,² and its complicated and sometimes paradoxical historical trajectory,³ it continues to frequent publications in the social sciences and humanities. Indeed, dedicated research on ideology has proliferated over the last few decades with the welcome consequence that specialist thinking about ideology is at a high-water mark of richness, diversity and theoretical sophistication.⁴

At the same time, however, this proliferation of research has resulted in a fragmentation in the study of ideology along a number of different boundaries.⁵ Some obvious fissures are disciplinary. For example, a long tradition of analysing ideology in political science has little interaction with an equally distinguished literature in intellectual history and political theory. Both of these, in turn, are fairly disconnected from the extensive consideration of ideology in discourse theory, and have only tentative links with new research in political and social psychology. But these disciplinary divisions also display a geographical pattern: largely (though not perfectly) corresponding to different ways of studying ideology on the North American and European sides of the Atlantic Ocean. This disciplinary and geographic fragmentation stymies interdisciplinarity, weakens research coordination, and prevents theorists from building on progress in other fields.

The result is a form of methodological parochialism, evident in the contrast between the assertion of a group of leading political psychologists that there has been a “recent resurgence of interest” in ideology,⁶ with the claim of an equally prominent discourse analyst that “during these past twenty-five years, ideology has become much less of an issue in social research”.⁷ If disciplinary communities’ objects of study were radically different, such parochialism might be unproblematic. However, we suggest that

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² Bell, 1962; Jost, 2006; Freeden, 2005; Brick, 2013
³ Eagleton, 1991; McLellan, 1995
⁴ Freeden, Sargent, and Stears, 2013, p. v
⁵ Leader Maynard, 2013
⁶ Jost, Kay, and Thorsdottir, 2009, p. 3
⁷ Fairclough, 2010, p. 25
there are more commonalities in the study of ideology across disciplinary and geographic boundaries than article citations or conference programmes would suggest. Geographically and disciplinarily differentiated communities engage in debates that are often strikingly alike and suggest ripe opportunities for intellectual cross-fertilization. In this paper, we point to a series of cross-cutting intellectual cleavages which link scholars from different disciplinary and geographic communities. We organise such cleavages around three questions that appear to be of deep relevance to most scholars of ideology, no matter their community: (1) What do we mean by ideology? (2) How do we model ideology? (3) Why do people adopt the ideologies they do?

The coverage of this piece is necessarily somewhat selective: rather than claiming to represent the entire field, our focus is on highlighting cross-cutting themes in the variety of contemporary research taking place in North America with that in Europe. Further, this review is less focused on providing a historical perspective on the study of ideology and more focused on rethinking the cleavages that animate contemporary debates about ideology. We emphasise that our intention throughout is not to suggest that some single master theory of ideology is possible or desirable. Instead we believe that connecting points of tangency between academic communities will allow scholars to focus on unexplored theoretical lacunae and points of potential cooperation, and exploit the comparative strengths and weaknesses of different research approaches.

**What do we mean by ideology?**

It has become routine to note the extreme variety of meanings imputed to the term ideology in academic research, with McLellan describing it as “the most elusive concept in the whole of social science”. But the familiarity of this concern has tended to obscure how the conceptual terrain occupied by ideology in the social sciences and humanities has changed. Variance remains, but in recent decades disparate research streams have increasingly deployed similar understandings of ideology. We trace this convergence, and residual divergences, along three cleavages: the evaluative connotations ascribed to ideology, the degree of coherence seen as necessary in an ideology, and the types of ideational components which make up ideologies.

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Evaluative connotations

Conceptualizations of ideology have often been divided into two categories: a pejorative usage, where ideology denotes something false, exploitative, or otherwise bad, and a non-pejorative usage, where it more neutrally denotes some sort of systematised political thinking. But across disciplines and geographies such highly pejorative conceptions of ideology as those often utilised in Marxist analysis have become increasingly unpopular. As Geertz noted, such usages of ideology produced “an egregiously loaded concept” for social science analysis.

Consequently, in North American political science, and related fields, a gradual move towards a more empiricist approach to ideological scholarship and away from a normatively-charged definition of the concept began in the aftermath of the Second World War. In Europe, a parallel transition was more uneven and sometimes motivated by different epistemic motivations. Initially, many scholars retained an interest in using the concept of ideology for critical or evaluative purposes. Yet, European scholars have also increasingly argued that such critical enterprises do not require that ideology itself be defined pejoratively.

The overall result is that across most scholarly communities, ideology is now generally used broadly and in a manner that does not take a normative position on the content or form of its beliefs. There are exceptions, and in discourse analysis, for example, some theorists have retained more pejorative definitions, which explicitly link ideology to domination and power. Even in these fields, however, there are those who have abandoned such conceptions for a broad and neutral definition or who, by also counting belief-systems of resistance to domination as ideologies, ultimately include almost all politically-orientated worldviews.

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9 See: Larrain, 1979; Thompson, 1984; McLellan, 1995; Humphrey, 2005
10 Geertz 1964, p. 51.
11 e.g. Huntington, 1957, p. 454
14 e.g. Zizek, 1994, p. 8; Fairclough, 2010, p. 27
16 e.g. Norval, 2000
Coherence of the system

Essentially all conceptions of ideology agree that it refers to some sort of idea-system, such that there is minimal controversy in affirming that if political thinking was totally disconnected and chaotic, there would be little sense in talking about ‘ideologies’. But different theorists cash out this requirement through various non-equivalent and often vaguely specified phrases like ‘coherence’, ‘consonance’, ‘constraint’ or ‘consistency’. This debate became prominent in postwar US research which converged on a definition of ideology as a highly consistent set of ideas with fixed and well-defined relationships between them. This view, particularly associated with Converse, conceived ideologies as constraints on the organization of attitudes. Subsequently, a well elaborated empirical literature developed to suggest that highly coherent political ideologies were more widespread amongst political elites than amongst mass publics.

By contrast, European scholars broadly eschewed such moves and rarely assumed that ideologies needed be tightly constrained or consistent. In part this has reflected the influence of theorists working in intellectual history and sociology, who critiqued the quick conclusion of ‘incoherence’ applied by scholars to systems of historical or vernacular thought unlike their own, a criticism echoed by some American scholars. Indeed, for Billig et al. and Freeden, contradictions and dilemmas are central to the trajectory of ideological development. Many European scholars now suggest that ideological analysis needs to incorporate a focus on the full range of political thinking, not simply highly elaborated and well-considered elite doctrines. These scholars caution that a narrower conception of ideology can reify the contingent ideological spectrum of American elite politics, draws too firm and dichotomous a distinction between the ideologically sophisticated elite and the purportedly unideological mass public, and risks

18 Luskin, 1987, pp.864-9
19 Converse, 1964
20 Luskin, 1987; Jennings, 1992; Knight, 2006, p. 623; Carmines and D’Amico, 2015, p. 207-211
21 Skinner, 1965; Boudon, 1989; Boudon, 1999; Skinner, 2002
23 Billig et al. (1988); Freeden (1996, pp. 36-40)
24 Hall, 1996c, p. 36; Freeden, 2008; Finlayson, 2012, p. 751; Freeden, 2013a, p. 116
obscurring how a diverse range of ideologies can impact public political thinking even when they are not totally or self-consciously internalized.25

To a degree, however, this cross-Atlantic contrast has been eroded, with Jost’s celebrated claim of an “end to the end of ideology” illustrating the rapidly shifting axes of debate in political psychology.26 Both Rosenberg and Jost, Federico, and Napier significantly relax the need for ideologies to have logical coherence, emphasizing instead the psychological benefits of ideological attachment and the necessity of ideologies in providing subjective interpretations of the political world.27 Other psychologists have further moved away from conceptualizing ideologies as purely “cognitive” objects, emphasizing the importance of emotional coherence which can exist in the absence of logical coherence - indeed, logical coherence is often compromised to maintain stable emotional links between concepts in an ideology.28 And, whilst not always using the terminology of ‘ideologies’, numerous scholars in North America share the desire of European scholars to examine what Freedden terms “actual political thinking”29 and Finlayson calls “political ideas as they are found ‘in the wild’”.30 The literature on social movements is one significant example.31 Each of these trends has brought the mainstream North American study of ideology into far closer alignment with the intellectual commitments of European scholars.

*The substance of ideologies*

The North American move to expand the forms of ordinary thinking that count as ‘ideologies’ contributes to a broader question shared across communities on what is properly understood as the ‘substance’ of ideologies, i.e. the sorts of ideational components that actually comprise ideologies. Here there is something of an unspoken contrast between approaches which depict ideologies primarily as bundles of attitudes or values - the majority but not exclusive view amongst political scientists and some

26 Jost, 2006
27 Rosenberg 1988; Jost, Federico and Napier, 2006, p. 309
28 Thagard and Kroon, 2008; Thagard 2012
29 Freedden 2008, p. 197
30 Finlayson 2012, p. 751
31 Wuthnow, 1989; Snow, 2004; Tarrow, 2013
psychologists\textsuperscript{32} - and those which stress the role of concepts, meanings, and language - the majority but not exclusive view in political theory, intellectual history, and discourse analysis.\textsuperscript{33} A third component of ideologies, their descriptive and purportedly factual content, might also be considered important,\textsuperscript{34} yet, barring some work on ideological ‘narratives’\textsuperscript{35} this has received relatively little analysis on either continent.\textsuperscript{36} Other components may also matter. Finlayson, for example, argues that an ideology’s rhetorical properties, such as its affective tone or deployment of recurring tropes are “not merely manifestations or expressions” of ideologies but actively shape and constitute them.\textsuperscript{37}

This all testifies to a considerably fragmented state of affairs - ideologies and political behaviour are likely to be centrally oriented around values, meanings, and beliefs about matters of fact, and the absence of integrated consideration of these three facets of ideology constitutes a serious weakness in the ability of the disciplines studying ideology to construct comprehensive accounts of the role of ideology in any aspect of social life.\textsuperscript{38} Of course, a certain relationship of primacy might exist here - people may largely pick and choose beliefs about matters of fact that suit their underlying values and predispositions, for example. But there are good reasons to think that such theories are overly crude,\textsuperscript{39} and they cannot be convincingly evaluated without a much more thorough integration of research on the overlapping value-based, meaning-based and fact-based aspects of ideology.\textsuperscript{40}

\textit{Definitional convergence}

While differences in definitions of ideology remain, then, there has been a considerable convergence, across disciplines and regions, towards a non-pejorative and broad definition of ideology. And three particularly authoritative conceptual investigations, by Hamilton, Gerring, and Knight have all endorsed this shift, producing similar arguments

\textsuperscript{32} e.g. Zaller, 1992; Poole and Rosenthal, 1997
\textsuperscript{33} e.g. Freeden, 1996; Finlayson, 2012; Howarth, Norval, and Stavrakakis, 2000; Tully, 1983
\textsuperscript{34} Hochschild, 2001
\textsuperscript{35} Hammack, 2008; Haidt, Graham, and Joseph, 2009; Shenhav, 2006
\textsuperscript{36} For exceptions see: Boudon, 1999, Hochschild, 2001; Mirels and Dean, 2006
\textsuperscript{37} Finlayson 2012, p. 9
\textsuperscript{39} Boudon, 1999; Hochschild, 2001, pp. 319-24
\textsuperscript{40} Hochschild, 2001, p. 329
for paring down the most restrictive criteria attached to ideology so as to leave a broadly encompassing concept that describes some manner of patterned and politically-orientated belief-system. As a consequence, for the considerable majority of researchers and recent works on ideology, encompassing almost all the European literature, and many disciplines in North America, ideology is very widespread. As Norval writes: “It is this emphasis on the ubiquity of ideology. . . that is at the heart of contemporary approaches to the question of ideology.” For such approaches, the binary question of whether ideology is present or not amongst an individual or group is unproductive - given that its answer will be dictated by the idiosyncratic and contestable definition of the individual analyst - tending to fragment the study of different sorts of political thinking from each other. A more effective investigation broadens the concept of ideology in order to sideline such a binary question, instead investigating the varying ways that different ideologies of different degrees of elaboration influence behaviour and thought.

This does not mean that definitional discussions of ideology should now be seen as settled. Lacunae remain: for example, the relationship between the terms ideology and ideological, or between ideology and both sub-ideology phenomena (such as doctrines, theories or narratives) and super-ideology phenomena (such as cultures, entire intellectual traditions, or ideological families). These are questions of ideology’s ‘scale’: it seems uncontroversial to suggest that many ideational entities can be ideological without themselves counting as ‘ideologies’. As Luskin wrote, “‘ideology’ as part should not be confused with ‘ideology’ as whole.” Yet the actual point at which a set of ideas does count as a full ideology (as well as clarification over what the relevant criteria are) has received little attention. And these are important questions, since the degree to which a particular society’s members are similar at the level of their full ideologies, or only hold in common more issue-centered ideological sub-systems, or merely share certain ideological components (like narratives, arguments, concepts and sets of factual assumptions) is an open question that likely varies across time and space.

41 Hamilton, 1987; Gerring 1997; Knight 2006
42 Freeden, 2005; Jost, 2006; Boudon, 1999, p. 159; Finlayson, 2012, pp. 752-3
43 Norval, 2000, p. 316
44 Jost, 2006, pp. 653-4
45 Luskin, 1987, p.863
Luskin’s own claim that an ideology necessarily “runs more or less the gamut of political affairs, or it is not an ideology”, strikes us as hard to sustain given increasing scholarly recognition that the boundaries of what counts as “political affairs” are themselves a subject of contestation and contextual variation. But some terminology for grappling with ideological phenomena of different scale is needed to analyse historical and contemporary developments in societies’ (potentially fragmenting) ideological landscapes. In general, the American literature on ideology has tended to operationalize ideology via very large-scale ideational systems with familiar labels: often just conservatism and liberalism, sometimes supplemented by other big ideologies like libertarianism or socialism. Many European scholars follow suit. But some theorists have also suggested that smaller scale systems of ideas may count either as full ideologies, or as derivative but explicitly limited phenomena like “partial ideologies”, “local ideologies”, or “thin ideologies”. Such concepts offer a potential means for bridging some of the gap between those theorists who still see ideology (being full, highly developed, and tightly coherent idea-systems) as relatively rare and those who see it (as loose, multi-form and patterned, but not necessarily tightly coherent idea-systems) as more ubiquitous. But in general, conceptual discussion on these distinctions has been limited – this remains one of several ‘next generation’ conceptual questions about ideology (i.e. questions beyond simply how to define what the concept means) which continue to need deeper consideration.

How should we model what people believe or think?

A second question faced by any approach to the study of ideology is how to actually represent or model the vast complexity and variety of actually existing systems of ideas, in both the process of analysis and the written outputs of research. There exists a basic divide between spatial and non-spatial approaches to this mapping of ideological content.

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46 Luskin, 1987, p. 862
47 Frazer, 2008
49 Schwarzmantel, 1998, pp. 8-9; Freeden, 1996; Eccleshall et al., 1984
50 Cassels, 2002, pp. xi-xii
51 Boudon, 1999
52 Freeden, 1998; Stanley, 2008
Non-spatial approaches further include both (i) symbolic models, which represent ideologies as interconnected networks of visually depictable symbols; and (ii) thick descriptive models, which engage in detailed prose discussion of the contents and nature of ideologies.

By comparison with the considerable convergence over the conceptualization of ideology, there remains tremendous variety in the deployment of these approaches to modelling. There is nothing necessarily problematic about this: each modelling approach offers contrasting advantages and disadvantages for different research projects or methodologies. Generally, they should not be seen as ‘rivals’. Spatial approaches are vastly easier to operationalise for quantitative methods (both via surveys at the data collection stage and statistical processing at the analysis stage) and may reflect heuristics used by actual political actors. But these benefits come at the cost of significant simplifications of belief content, which scholars often fail to acknowledge or render explicit. Symbolic approaches offer considerable expository strengths in describing complex relationships between ideological elements, and highlighting change in such relationships, but are much clumsier at representing in detail the content of individual elements. Thick descriptive approaches offer by far the most accurate representation of the substantive complexity and richness of ideological content, but much less easily facilitate causal or correlative analysis, and inefficiently aggregate into large-N datasets on different ideological positions. This all suggests that efforts to mix modelling approaches should be much more widely attempted.

**Spatial approaches**

Many scholars have taken a spatial approach in modelling ideologies, with considerable debate over the appropriate number and class of dimensions necessary to do so. Scholars who see ideologies as mappable in a low number of dimensions often visualize ideological positions using Cartesian coordinate systems, in which each axis represents one dimension of a proposed ideational space.

Ideologies have been described along a single left-right dimension for over a century. Despite repeated attempts to supplant one-dimensional ideological mapping with more complex characterizations, the approach retains significant academic support.
Among the most vocal advocates of a one-dimensional state space is Jost, who advances a largely instrumentalist argument. While conceding that the left-right distinction does not capture the full range of ideological possibility, he suggests that it captures most important information about political attitudes in a parsimonious way since, at least within Western political arenas, political ideologies have converged into a single dimension.\(^{53}\) Because the spatial approach has been most richly elaborated within American scholarship, the two-party system in the United States also looms large among advocates of single dimensional ideological mapping. From this perspective, US political behavior and public opinion can generally be mapped along one-dimension with only occasional need for a second dimension.\(^{54}\)

Two-dimensional characterizations of the ideological state space are also common. Rokeach provided one of the early influential mappings of political values, highlighting two dimensions, one measuring relative support for equality and the other measuring relative support for freedom.\(^{55}\) He famously associated the resulting quadrants with political systems: fascism (low freedom, low equality), capitalism (high freedom, low equality), communism (high equality, low freedom), and socialism (high freedom, high equality).\(^{ii}\)

Many other two-dimensional mappings exist. Inglehart draws on decades of cross-national values research to map political values along a secular-rational axis and a survival versus self-expression axis.\(^{56}\) Braithwaite points to a preference-for-security dimension and a preference-for-harmony dimension, with each dimension operationalized as a cluster of related goals.\(^{57}\) Carmines and D’Amico advance the familiar view that economic and social issues constitute two separate dimensions of ideology.\(^{58}\) Cultural Theory, originally developed as a way to characterize attitudes towards risks, employs a “group” axis that describes the salience of group membership to personal identity and a “grid” axis describes the acceptance of rules or regulations in

\(^{53}\) Jost, Kay, and Thorsdottir, 2009; Jost, Nosek, and Gosling, 2008
\(^{54}\) Poole and Rosenthal, 2011
\(^{55}\) Rokeach 1973
\(^{56}\) Inglehart and Welzel, 2010
\(^{57}\) Braithwaite, 1997
\(^{58}\) Carmines and D’Amico, 2015
everyday life.59 Still other researchers have increasingly used personality factors as dimensions along which political attitudes can be distributed. Dual process theory proposes that Right-wing Authoritarianism (RWA) and Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) scores can also allow a two-dimensional mapping of an individual’s “sociological or ideological attitude”.60

A further group of approaches bridge spatial and non-spatial perspectives, suggesting commonalities across different disciplinary perspectives. These scholars still invoke the notion of spatial dimensions but move away from an explicitly spatial representation of ideology because of the multidimensionality of their models. For instance, Haidt’s moral foundations theory holds that ideologies are rooted in moral intuitions, deep-rooted reactions to social organization that are hard-wired by evolution into our minds.61 In particular, Haidt has identified six core moral foundations: Harm/care, fairness/reciprocity, ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, purity/sanctity and liberty/oppression. These values are derived from a thorough review of the primary literature in anthropology and evolutionary psychology, rather than from factorial analysis of survey data.iii In another theory that draws from extensive cross-national work, Hofstede proposes five dimensions to classify national cultures. These dimensions are power distance (which describes the degree of societal inequality), uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, and long-term vs. short-term orientation.62 Still, as the complexity of ideological content increases, there is something of a natural move away from spatial reasoning to maintain a useful heuristic for representing this content.

**Debating the value of spatial approaches**

Another underappreciated link between the North American and European academies inheres in criticisms of such spatial approaches to ideologies. Critics within psychology,63

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59 Douglas, 1970
60 Sibley and Duckitt, 2008
61 Haidt, 2012
62 Hofstede, 2011
63 Haidt, Graham, and Joseph, 2009; Rosenberg, 1988; Cohrs, 2012
political science,\textsuperscript{64} and political theory and intellectual history\textsuperscript{65} have raised a number of similar concerns.\textsuperscript{66}

Many theorists accept that spatial approaches offer some utility to the study of ideology, but worry that such models - particularly unidimensional models - excessively oversimplify the actual diversity of real world belief-systems. Both psychologists and political scientists have argued that several prominent US ideologies (let alone those of other societies) are poorly captured on a left-right and especially liberal-conservative scale, notably libertarianism.\textsuperscript{67} In fact, even the psychological underpinnings of libertarianism may be distinct, with suggestions that libertarians structure their ideology along far less affective terms, holding a belief system with fewer emotional components.\textsuperscript{68} Other North American scholars have questioned the implicit bundling of conservatism and resistance to change in psychological theories of left-right orientation.\textsuperscript{69}

In political science, Zaller argues against a one-dimensional characterization of ideological content, instead reframing ideology as a “constellation of related value dimensions”.\textsuperscript{70} At the same time, Zaller argues that individual scores on these different dimensions still tend to be at least moderately correlated and thus, while dimension specific measurements of attitudes are preferable, a one-dimensional left-right construct still captures a meaningful part of the variation in political beliefs. Even physiological critiques have been integrated into this debate; an fMRI study suggests at least three separate dimensions of political attitudes, each associated with neural activation in a different region of the brain: individualism in the medial prefrontal cortex and temporoparietal junction, conservatism in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, and radicalism in the ventral striatum and posterior cingulate.\textsuperscript{71}

Others critique the way specific unidimensional models, such as the liberal-conservative continuum widely deployed in North American scholarship, are not solely utilised in reference to a specific political context but often explicitly or implicitly

\textsuperscript{64} Conover and Feldman, 1981; Hochschild, 2001, p. 315; Swedlow, 2008
\textsuperscript{65} Freedeen, 2010, pp. 479-481; Freedeen, 2013b, p. 11
\textsuperscript{66} see also: Leader Maynard, 2013, pp. 314-15
\textsuperscript{67} Hochschild, 2001, p. 315; Cohrs, 2012, pp. 57-8 Haidt, Graham, and Joseph, 2009
\textsuperscript{68} Iyer et al., 2010
\textsuperscript{69} e.g., Greenberg and Jonas, 2003. But see the response of Jost et al., 2003a; Jost et al., 2003b
\textsuperscript{70} Zaller, 1992, p. 26
\textsuperscript{71} Zamboni et al., 2009
presented as universal models of political belief.\textsuperscript{72} This can encourage reification in the chosen dimension - so that when the subjects do not provide the sets of beliefs presumed by analysts to be the natural definition of ‘liberal’ or ‘conservative’ or ‘left’ or ‘right’ this is taken to indicate that are thinking ‘incoherently’ or ‘non-ideologically’ rather than demonstrating that this dimensional model is failing to capture their actual political thinking.\textsuperscript{73} More generally, specific unidimensional models encourage an insensitivity to cultural variance and temporal change in the dominant ideological space. The dominant US liberal-conservative dimension can be applied only very awkwardly to European democracies, for example, where the presence of socialists and social democrats as committed advocates of ‘change’ and ‘equality’ results in liberal parties and positions generally being interpreted as occupying the middle of a Left-Right spectrum and being primarily orientated, as the name suggests, around liberty, though with important roles for concepts like equality, fairness and justice.\textsuperscript{74} More generally, there is little evidence that the specific unidimensional models derived from American or European politics possess a natural fit to the ideological landscape in Africa,\textsuperscript{75} China,\textsuperscript{76} the Islamic world,\textsuperscript{77} or to emergent ideologies orientated around “global imaginaries”.\textsuperscript{78iv}

In articulating such challenges to dimensional, and particularly unidimensional, models of ideology, groups on either side of the Atlantic are arguing in tandem, but rarely in dialogue, for more complex models. While stronger criticisms of spatial approaches to ideological thinking are most frequently associated with European scholars, there is a diversity of voices on both sides of the Atlantic. For example, in US psychology scholarship, the left-right distinction tends to be framed as a bipolar dimension, in that left-wing and right-wing positions are defined as opposing belief systems.\textsuperscript{79} However, a critical position argues that that “left” and “right” ideological positions are better understood as bivariate: distinctive sets of beliefs that are not inherently opposite. This idea was first seriously advanced by Kerlinger who argued that ideologies were clusters

\textsuperscript{72} e.g. Jost, Federico, and Napier, 2006, p. 310
\textsuperscript{73} Converse, 1964; Jacoby, 2009, pp. 547-7; see also: Rosenberg, 1988; Hochschild, 2001, p. 316
\textsuperscript{74} Tetlock, 1984; Freeden, 1996, pp. 139-314; Hall, 1996c; Adams, 1998; Freeden, 2009
\textsuperscript{75} Hendrickson and Zaki, 2013
\textsuperscript{76} Jenco, 2013; Pan and Xu, 2015
\textsuperscript{77} Ayoob, 2009; Browers, 2013
\textsuperscript{78} Steger, 2008, Steger, 2013
\textsuperscript{79} Federico, 2007
of attitudes that respond to sets of “criterial referents,” understood as classes, categories or phenomenon in the world that trigger individual attitudinal judgments.\textsuperscript{80} Other critics cast doubt on the appropriateness of thinking about ideologies within a spatial framework at all. For example, to Conover and Feldman ideologies are most important for their symbolic role.\textsuperscript{81} They suggest we should treat ideologies as a political symbol, and focus on the social differentiation that ideological attachment provides. In this, they echo almost identical criticisms lobbied by European scholars.

\textit{Non-spatial approaches}

A different approach to the representation of ideology eschews spatial heuristics. For analysts within political theory, intellectual history, discourse analysis, and qualitative political science, political psychology or sociology, ideologies are principally set apart by their substantive ideational content. This can take the form of complex and varying conceptual configurations,\textsuperscript{82} distinct set of historically textured myths and signifiers,\textsuperscript{83} notionally factual content\textsuperscript{84} or idiosyncratic arguments and ways of deploying rhetorical devices.\textsuperscript{85} Hall argues that in such approaches, “when we analyse an ideology in terms of its ‘key concepts’ we are really mapping the whole web of meanings, the discursive space, which these core ideas, working together, constitute as that ideology’s ‘regime of truth’ - to borrow Foucault’s metaphor.”\textsuperscript{86} Analysts committed to this sort of project focus on the detailed content of ideologies, arguing that far too much is lost by the reduction of the substantive content that describes ideologies actual characteristics to one or two numerical dimensions. Consequently, they prefer to model ideology through one of two alternative approaches, which we term ‘thick description’ or ‘symbolic mapping’.

The dominant non-spatial approach to modelling ideology is thick description: detailed prose discussion of the particular beliefs and arguments, discursive tendencies and rhetorical devices, or cognitive processes that define the character of particular

\textsuperscript{80} Kerlinger, 1967  
\textsuperscript{81} Conover and Feldman, 1981  
\textsuperscript{82} Freeden, 1996  
\textsuperscript{83} Howarth, Norval, and Stavrakakis, 2000  
\textsuperscript{84} Boudon, 1989  
\textsuperscript{85} Finlayson, 2012  
\textsuperscript{86} Hall, 1996c, p. 38
ideologies. This is a strategy long-deployed by classic political ideologies textbooks on both sides of the Atlantic, but it has a natural affinity for any approach which analyses in depth the actual content of the ideas that make up liberalism, conservatism, socialism, nationalism or other ideologies. Skinner’s studies of the ideological traditions that provide the foundations of modern political thought, for example, provide a deep analysis of the evolving ideals of renaissance and reformation political thought and their contextual role in the political struggles of the period. The ‘rhetorical psychology’ approach of Billig involves detailed reconstruction of the language, social representations and arguments deployed by groups like the ‘Young Conservatives’, British Fascist groups, or monarchists. And in the influential cultural studies of Hall, political thought orientated around liberalism, struggles for racial equality, or conceptions of ‘New Times’ have their distinctive conceptions, historical roots, and contextual political battles analysed and interrelated to describe the nature of the ideology and its role in political thought and action. More recently, the new Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies includes chapters on twenty ideologies, ideological families, or regional ideological communities, all involving the thick description of their component arguments, assumptions, historical narratives, values, reasons, claims, contexts and styles of thinking about politics. And in discussions of ideology in other fields, such as International Relations or media studies, there is also a frequent reliance on thick description of, for example, the specific narratives and conceptions which have influenced states’ foreign policy, the idiosyncratic ways of thinking that shape war-waging practices, or the tropes and frames relied on by British tabloid and broadsheet newspapers.

An alternative from of non-spatial modelling of ideology is concept or symbolic mapping. Such modelling techniques seek to represent ideologies visually in diagrams built from components linked by connections in a certain structure. For instance, the Cognitive-Affective Mapping (CAM) approach developed by Paul Thagard and

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87 Eccleshall et al., 1984; Heywood, 2007; Sargent, 2009
88 Skinner, 1965; Skinner, 1978
89 Billig, 1991
90 Hall 1996a; Hall 1996b; Hall 1996c
91 Freeden, Sargent, and Stears, 2013
92 Cassels, 2002; Hunt, 2009; Drolet, 2010
93 Owen 1997; Dillon and Reid 2009
94 Fowler, 1991
associates at the University of Waterloo seeks to supplement early forms of concept mapping with considerations of emotion, by visually representing the affective valence of ideological components in terms of direction (negative or positive emotional) and strength.\textsuperscript{95} Compared with thick descriptive methods of modelling ideological content, such symbolic representations involve considerable simplification of semantic content and argument, and downplay variety in the different sorts of components that make up ideologies. But they efficiently represent structural relationships between ideological components, the nature and extent of ideological change through earlier and later symbolic maps of the same individuals or groups, and (when including affect) the affective tenor of different aspects of an overarching ideology. Symbolic mapping may also be thought to include diagrams which do not model networks of ideas themselves: Collins models change within broad cultural or ideological traditions by interactional diagrams indicating the relationships of major intellectuals who construct each tradition.\textsuperscript{96}

Some of the most sophisticated forms of ideological modelling sit on the boundary between thick descriptive and symbolic approaches. The influential morphological approach of Freeden, for example, relies heavily on a thick descriptive representation of numerous ideologies, but involving diagrammatic metaphors akin to a symbolic approach, identifying ‘core’, ’adjacent’ and ‘periphery’ components of ideology and discussing in detail their structural configuration (or ‘morphology’).\textsuperscript{97} And a range of other theorists, including Hall and Steger deploy similar metaphors of core concepts, structure, and ideational clusters.\textsuperscript{98} As a consequence, whilst these theorists do not engage in symbolic mapping themselves, their work has the potential for both informing and itself incorporating symbolic modelling.\textsuperscript{99v}

**Why do people adopt the ideologies they do?**
Different accounts of the drivers of individual ideological attachment can seem, at first

\textsuperscript{95} Thagard, 2012; Homer-Dixon et al., 2013  
\textsuperscript{96} Collins, 1998  
\textsuperscript{97} Freeden, 1996; Freeden, 2013a  
\textsuperscript{98} Hall, 1996c; Steger, 2013  
\textsuperscript{99} E.g. Buckle, 2013, p.234
glance, to reflect established scholarly divisions between individual and social forms of explanation - even accepting, as many ideology scholars now appear to, that the individual and social are ultimately co-constitutive.\textsuperscript{100} But in truth, the factors that have been proposed as causes of ideological attachment span a broad continuum of more or less individual or social forces, including genetic, physiological, psychological, political, discursive and institutional factors. In addition, most theorists acknowledge that key determinants of ideology bridge multiple levels of analysis through complex cross-scale interactions. A key weakness in the contemporary study of ideology is that the formal study of these interactions remains rare: integrative models of ideology remain few in number, and those that do exist tend to integrate different levels of analysis with uneven attention.\textsuperscript{101}

\textit{From the individual to the group in North America}

Genetic and physiological accounts portray ideological attachment as primarily an outcome of individual attributes. One emerging body of literature claims that there is a genetic basis for political attitudes, drawing from twin studies.\textsuperscript{102} That political attitudes and ideology should have a genetic component is hardly surprising, since an individual’s genetics at least partly influences most psychological traits.\textsuperscript{103} Further, disposition towards order and rules may have a biological basis,\textsuperscript{104} and some scholars suggesting that two ideological phenotypes may exist: one with a social orientation that prioritizes in-group solidarity and moral rigidity, and another that is more communitarian and morally flexible.\textsuperscript{105} However, the findings from this literature remain controversial.\textsuperscript{106}

A related literature has investigated the physiological basis of political attitudes. For instance, liberals appear to have more gray matter in the anterior cingulated cortex, while conservatives have more gray matter in the right amygdala.\textsuperscript{107} Within the US,

\textsuperscript{101} E.g. Jost, Federico, and Napier, 2006; van Dijk, 1998; Hammack, 2008
\textsuperscript{102} Alford, Funk, and Hibbing, 2005; Bell, Schermer, and Vernon, 2009) and genome-wide analyses (Hatemi et al., 2011
\textsuperscript{103} Bouchard, 2004
\textsuperscript{104} Smith et al., 2011
\textsuperscript{105} Alford, Funk, and Hibbing, 2005
\textsuperscript{106} E.g. Beckwith and Morris 2008; Charney 2008; Shultziner 2013
\textsuperscript{107} Kanai et al., 2011
amygdala activity is stronger in Republicans, while insula activations are stronger in Democrats.\textsuperscript{108} These studies also provide diverse evidence for cross-cultural physiological correlates of ideological beliefs. Thus, conservatives appear to have a higher persistence of habitual response behavior, associated with a lower anterior cingulate activity,\textsuperscript{109} while differential neural responses in brain activity correlate with social and political behavior.\textsuperscript{110} Effects have also been identified at the level of the body. For instance, individuals with lower sensitivity to threatening images and noises, measured by skin conductance and automatic blinking responses, were more likely to support a cluster of policies typically framed as liberal.\textsuperscript{111} All such differences may be genetic in origin, or they could reflect a combination of genetic and environmental determinants.

Psychological research on ideology tends to be largely individualist in its orientation, in focusing on the way that underlying psychological traits and personality types create an “elective affinity” for certain ideological positions.\textsuperscript{112} But psychological research has accorded an increasing role to group-level factors in shaping collective belief systems. Dominant explanations for ideological attachment within political psychology can be loosely grouped by their focus on cognition/affect, morality, or personality. These psychological accounts are paralleled by an argument common to both psychologists and political scientists that ideologies are at least partially rooted in individual-level material interests and life experiences.

In the cognition camp, conservatism has been influentially framed as a form of motivated social cognition that serves a range of epistemic, existential and relational psychological functions such as uncertainty avoidance and threat management.\textsuperscript{113} While these functions are often framed as psychologically desirable, other consequences of conservatism may well be harmful to psychological health and wellbeing, including increased incidences of depression and trauma.\textsuperscript{114} Under the morality approach, Haidt

\textsuperscript{108} Schrieber et al., 2005
\textsuperscript{109} Amodio et al., 2007
\textsuperscript{110} Chiao et al., 2009; Rule et al., 2010
\textsuperscript{111} Oxley et al., 2008
\textsuperscript{112} Jost, Federico, and Napier, 2006
\textsuperscript{113} Jost, Kay, and Thorsdottir, 2009; Jost et al., 2003b
\textsuperscript{114} Bonanno and Jost, 2006
argues for substantial differences between the moral concerns that underlie different ideological beliefs, with conservatives tapping a broader range of human moral impulses while liberals engaging only a subset of these.\textsuperscript{115} Here, affective reactions precede rational considerations and deliberative moral reasoning is largely a post-hoc explanation for affective, moral intuitions.\textsuperscript{116} Finally, a growing focus on personality has linked the big-five traits, particularly openness to experience, with ideological positioning\textsuperscript{117} and other types of political behavior, such as political and civic engagement.\textsuperscript{118}

Yet, these same psychological literatures are more sensitive to group-level concerns than is often portrayed, particularly through their focus on social contexts and political institutions. A growing body of work focuses on political socialization, including the transmissions of ideologies through families; these effects appear most pronounced during late adolescence and early adulthood.\textsuperscript{119} From this perspective, individuals acquire some aspects of their ideological identity through social learning from parents and close family members.\textsuperscript{120} System justification theory argues that ideological attachment is contingent on an individual’s status within prevailing political and economic institutions,\textsuperscript{121} though broadly, individuals tend to adopt ideological positions that rationalize prevailing social arrangements.\textsuperscript{122} Such theories overlap with established research in political science on the use of political communication, framing effects, and elite cues to trigger ideological shifts in public opinion in ways that serve the political interests of partisan groups. In a similar fashion, Braithwaite provides a sophisticated account that links political attitudes with political institutions, suggesting that political constraints and a combative political arena force individuals to trade off their preferences and, in effect, choose one side of the more traditional left-right scale.\textsuperscript{123} In this sense, ideologies can be understood as tools to reduce multidimensional belief systems into low-dimensional identities that allow coordination of behavior.

\textsuperscript{115} Graham, Haidt, and Nosek, 2009
\textsuperscript{116} Haidt, 2007
\textsuperscript{117} e.g. McCrae, 1996
\textsuperscript{118} Gerber et al., 2010; Sibley and Duckitt, 2008; Mondak, 2010
\textsuperscript{119} Stoker and Bass 2013
\textsuperscript{120} Rico and Jennings 2015
\textsuperscript{121} Jost and Hunyady, 2005
\textsuperscript{122} Jost, Banaji, and Nosek, 2004
\textsuperscript{123} Braithwaite, 1998
Even complex genetic-environmental links have been integrated into group-level thinking on occasion. For instance, a recent study finds that, among those individuals who possess one particular dopamine receptor gene variant, increased numbers of friendships in late adolescence predict subsequent adoption of liberal values. However, for those individuals lacking the gene variant, no such association is observed.\textsuperscript{124} Such research illustrates how even predominantly individualist accounts offer more opportunities for engagement with group-level accounts than common characterizations portray.

Finally, a range of scholars, particularly political scientists, have studied how individual material interests and individual life experiences can shape ideological preferences or propensity to attach to particular ideologies. This work suggests at least some linkage between individual wealth and conservatism, as well as the potential for traumatic individual experiences to shape ideological attachment.\textsuperscript{125} For instance, winning the lottery can drive individuals to become more right-wing and less egalitarian.\textsuperscript{126} In a radically different theoretical framework, Marxist-influenced approaches to the study of ideology similarly emphasise the importance of economic power in reproducing ideological narratives that serve elite material interests.\textsuperscript{127}

\textit{From the group to individual in Europe}

On the other hand, the European academy has typically adopted a more social or group-oriented approach, with an overwhelming focus on discourse and language as determinants of ideological attachment and change. European theorists are largely united in emphasising how perception of the social (and material) world is possible only via conceptual frameworks made available through discourse. Since discourses vary from one social context to another, discursive resources enable and constrain the forms of thinking which subjects are able to engage in.\textsuperscript{128} Consequently, all political thought is governed by the nature of available political discourses: the particular concepts, rhetorical

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{124} Settle et al., 2010 \\
\textsuperscript{125} Doherty, Green, and Gerber 2006; Ansolabehere, Rodden and Snyder 2006; Hersh 2013 \\
\textsuperscript{126} Powdthavee and Oswald 2014 \\
\textsuperscript{127} Simonds, 1989, Shelby, 2004 \\
\textsuperscript{128} Gramsci, 1971; Freeden, 1996, p. 57; Fairclough, 2001, p. 2; Wittgenstein, 2001; Skinner, 2002, pp. 8-26,44-46; Nafstad et al., 2007, pp. 317-18
\end{footnotesize}
devices and discursive conventions which individuals are socialised into.\textsuperscript{129} Changes in individual, group or societal ideologies are therefore prompted by and reflected in changes in these constitutive discursive components.\textsuperscript{130}

As in the American literature, there is variety in the sorts of phenomena theorists focus on within the broad category of discourse. In the morphological approach of Freeden, the emphasis is on concepts as complex units of meaning that constitute ideological systems. Central to Freeden’s approach is an examination of the ways in which the same formal concepts (like equality, liberty or order) are invested with a wide range of different meanings within different ideologies, and placed in different positions and configurations in ideology’s overall morphology. Different ideologies are thus engaged in a competition for “the control of public political language”,\textsuperscript{131} with political thinking centrally determined by the particular semantic moves made by dominant producers of ideology. ‘Skinnerian’ intellectual historians (after Quentin Skinner) similarly focus on the contextually contingent meanings of key concepts in shaping ideology, and also place particular emphasis on the existing ideological landscape as shaping possible thought and future ideological development.\textsuperscript{132} This latter focus is shared by the sociological approach of Boudon, who analyses how existing assumptions underpin heuristic thought processes in producing ideological beliefs, and stresses how networks of epistemic authorities produce such assumptions.\textsuperscript{133} For critical discourse analysts like Fairclough or Wodak and Meyer, rhetorical theorists like Billig and Finlayson, and also for Skinner’s approach to intellectual history, stress is placed on the particular syntactic and rhetorical devices (such as frames, metaphors and idioms) and processes (such as nominalization, allusion, paradiastole or topic-setting) used in discourse to inculcate particular ideological impressions in an audience, and the particular institutions (especially media and political organisations) which do so.\textsuperscript{134} Theorists influenced by post-structuralism, meanwhile, have tended to focus on larger semantic structures like myths, imaginaries, narratives and identities, emphasising how these are constructed and then reified in ways which disguise

\textsuperscript{129} Skinner, 2002; Tully, 1983  
\textsuperscript{130} van Dijk, 2013, p. 175  
\textsuperscript{131} Freeden, 2010, p. 480  
\textsuperscript{132} Tully, 1983; Skinner, 2002  
\textsuperscript{133} Boudon 1989; Boudon 1999.  
\textsuperscript{134} Billig 1991; Skinner 1999; Wodak and Meyer 2009; Fairclough 2010; Finlayson 2012.
their contingent and contextual origins. And both critical discourse analysts and post-structuralists have called for an increasing focus on non-verbal components of discourse - including symbolic, visual, performative, and somatic displays.

Yet, as the individualist focus of much American scholarship has increasingly been complemented by an acknowledgement of group and social factors, so these more obviously social accounts in the European literature incorporate, to varying degrees, individual factors. A theme running through the work of many European theorists is the critical role of contextual political manoeuvring in shaping ideological changes, with key ideological moves, alterations and articulations made by political actors in response to contextual political struggles. Individuals use ideologies, deploy ideological claims and engage in acts of ideological creativity as part of attempt to win political battles. Correspondingly, tactical and strategic choices made by individuals are critical in shaping ideological change.

Some European theorists have also sought to analyse fundamental psychological drivers underpinning ideology. Both Elster and Boudon place individuals’ needs for cognitive efficiency at the centre of their analysis of ideology, emphasising how individuals’ pursuit of epistemically satisfying (rather than optimal) beliefs leads them to deploy unreliable heuristics in adopting new beliefs. These heuristics often involve inferences from their existing ideological beliefs. For example, Boudon analyses how individuals’ cognitive interests lead them to rely on epistemic authorities who appear, in the social context in question, trustworthy, and illustrates how perceptions of social role can interact with individual needs in making certain ideas appear attractive. More generally, Billig and van Dijk have both sought to integrate considerations of psychology and discourse in formulating their approaches to ideological analysis. Finally, in a different vein, psychoanalytic theories of individuals’ psychological needs and processes

135 Howarth, Norval, and Stavrakakis, 2000; Zizek, 1994
138 Elster 1982; Boudon 1989
139 Boudon, 1989, pp. 83-85
140 Boudon, 1989, p. 117
141 Billig 1991; van Dijk 1998
are central to the approach of several post-structuralist theorists, including Zizek, Stavrakakis, and Glynos.\textsuperscript{142}

\textbf{Discussion: The future study of ideology}

Research on ideology has never been as diverse or abundant as it is at present. The recent surge of work in political and social psychology in North America has supplemented an equally notable revival in political theory and sociology in Europe, itself preceded by enduring work in political science and intellectual history. But, as a consequence, research on ideology has also never been so fragmented. Despite the existence of common interests, convergence on a number of core assumptions, and complementary strengths and weaknesses, interdisciplinary volumes or references to work across disciplinary boundaries, and the Atlantic Ocean, are rare.\textsuperscript{143} On all three core questions examined in this paper, theorists are missing critical possibilities for mutual support and inefficiently labouring over tasks from scratch that have been considered extensively by others.

To continue making significant advances, the field of ideological analysis must become more integrated. This is not to call for a single definitive ‘theory of ideology’. Some differences between disciplines over aims, methods and consequent expertise necessarily endure: political psychologists are always going to be better placed to investigate some questions than intellectual historians, political theorists or sociologists, and vice versa. Nor is this a call for all research on ideology to share a single, academic objective. Different approaches to the study of ideology will necessarily draw different types of conclusions from different facets of ideological behavior. But diverse scholarly communities can benefit from a mutual appreciation of each others’ academic projects and a much more integrated dialogue. We conclude this review by considering the potential gains from such integration across all three of the questions that animated this review: (1) What do we mean by ideology? (2) How do we model ideology? (3) Why do people adopt the ideologies they do? Generally, we argue that there is the strongest

\textsuperscript{142} Zizek 1994; Stavrakakis 2000; Glynos 2001

\textsuperscript{143} For partial exceptions that suggest some openness to the potential for interdisciplinarity, see: Jost and Major, 2001; Freeden, 2007; Homer-Dixon et al., 2013; Freeden, Sargent and Stears 2013.
existing convergence with respect to the first question, and the weakest with respect to the last question.

To date, the most significant integration across different approaches to ideology has been with respect to conceptualization. As we have shown, scholars with diverse theoretical commitments have gradually adopted converging definitions of ideology. Importantly, this convergence has occurred even as different scholars maintain fundamentally different research objectives. It has not been a function of critical theorists, for instance, abandoning their constructivist epistemology or quantitative scholars abandoning their positivism. Instead, this convergence appears to have organically emerged in response to parallel research advances, and has done so without undermining the distinctiveness of each community’s research paradigm.

This is a positive development, and a necessary condition for facilitating dialogue between isolated scholastic communities. Theorists should continue to encourage a general convergence towards a shared understanding of ideology as a non-pejorative and broad concept that refers to a diverse range of idea-systems influencing political and social thought and behaviour. As Gerring suggests, individual definitions may legitimately vary somewhat to suit individual research projects or methodologies. But keeping, as far as possible, those definitions proximate to one another in a shared conceptual space encourages analyses of different sorts of idea-systems and worldviews to be formulated in tandem and dialogue, rather than in isolation. A broad and non-pejorative conception of ideology does not prevent critical analysis of ideologies, nor does it prevent us from deploying more specific ‘subtype concepts’ (rigid ideology, thin ideology, elite ideology and so forth) when more specificity is needed. Indeed, conceptual development here should be encouraged. We also think it critical for scholars to press ahead with the existing but incomplete trend of studying vernacular mass-public forms of political thinking, and conceptualizing them as ‘ideological’ even when they are messy, inchoate, latent, eclectic or hybridized belief-systems that diverge from the expected patterning of elite ideologies or traditional understandings of left-right or liberal-conservative ideological packages. The contrasting practice of deeming public

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144 Gerring 1997, pp. 965-966 & 982-983
145 Snow, 2004, p. 400
political thinking incoherent or unideological in light of unnecessarily narrow notions of what ideology ‘should’ look like undermines the empirical openness of research on public political thinking. It also significantly impairs the capacity of research on ideology to keep up with both cross-cultural variation and temporal change in the ideological landscapes of contemporary states. Where conceptual differences do remain between ideological analysts, it is important that they be clarified and navigated with consideration of the full scope of research on ideology, rather than presumptively or by offering justifications that speak only to an analyst’s most proximate methodological cousins.

With respect to how scholars model ideology, we find persistent differences. Diversity in the modelling of ideologies is to be welcomed, but the existing literature seems considerably below the optimal level of integration, multi-model usage, and exploration of novel modelling methods. Yet diverse literatures reveal much stronger parallels than other reviews have often assumed, and this suggests that greater integration is feasible and would make contemporary research richer and more precise in its capacity to conceptually grapple with different ideological positions.

For example, thick description must ultimately be relied upon by both spatial and symbolic non-spatial approaches at some level - coding rules cannot be formulated without some descriptive account of ideational content, and symbolic maps are open to infinite interpretations regarding the actual meaning of components and connections without descriptive clarification. Yet detailed discussion of ideologies’ substantive meanings and patterns of argument in research deploying spatial and symbolic non-spatial models of ideologies remains remarkably rare. Instead scholars tend to condense explanation of the actual ideological content that their dimensions or symbols represent into a few summative lines referencing just one or two attitudes. There is no good reason for such a crude flight from actual ideological content, even accepting a focus on the causes of ideological attachment rather than the substance of ideological beliefs. Quantitative methods built around survey questions and dimensional models could easily be supplemented with thicker descriptive discussions, ideally rooted in open-ended empirical research on the actual thinking behind survey or interview responses.

Conversely, the general failure of thick descriptive approaches to incorporate
verifiable data on large-N samples of ideological attitudes represented in spatial models is curious, and renders much thick descriptive work, which is often admirably grounded in textual analysis of high intellectual discourse or media coverage, frustratingly untethered from measures of the attitudes of ordinary voters and citizens. This is particularly ironic given the increasing interest of theorists using thick descriptive modelling in studying the actual political thinking of ordinary people. As this highlights, this call for modelling integration goes for the forms of data on which models are based as much as the expository models themselves. Non-spatial approaches are also weaker in their capacity to make relational comparisons between ideologies so as to ensure that individual ideologies are not studied in isolation. Spatialization and symbolization could thus enhance the power of thick descriptive approaches to provide precise differentiated accounts of the ideological topography in given political contexts.

Integration in literature focused on our third cleavage – examining the reasons why people adopt the ideological positions they do – is weakest of all. The North American and European literatures have substantially converged in identifying the need to synthesise individual and group causes of ideological attachment and change. Yet there remains a fundamental asymmetry between the two academies in attempting such synthesis. A discourse vs. psychology faultline is particularly visible, with theorists stressing discourse largely neglecting psychology, and vice-versa. Thus Jost, Federico, and Napier valuably affirm the importance of both the “social construction of the discursive superstructure” and the “psychological construction of the motivational substructure”. Yet their resulting analysis seems lop-sided, largely reasserting the importance of the latter in shaping ideological attachment. It includes only a very narrow account of social factors taken from classic political science, in which elite ideologies are fed to ordinary citizens through political and media institutions. “Ideological bundles that are constructed through elite discourse,” Jost, Federico, and Napier explain, “anchor” both poles of the left-right (or, in the USA and elsewhere, liberal-conservative) spectrum. . . the content associated with different ideological positions is absorbed by

146 Freedén, 2008; Freedén, 2013b; Finlayson, 2012, p. 754
147 See, for example: Buckle, 2013
members of the mass public who ‘take cues’ from those elites”.\textsuperscript{149} This highly top-down account of the social neglects most of the discursive dynamics analysed in European political theory, intellectual history, discourse analysis and sociology, as well as those North American theorists who do place a greater focus on language and discourse, such as Edelman, Wuthnow, Balkin, Snow or Tarrow.\textsuperscript{150} Partly as a consequence it fails, despite Jost, Federico and Napier’s welcome affirmation of the ideological nature of ordinary citizens, to recognise and analyse ideological agitation and creativity outside the elite, and the relevance of non-elite ideological configurations which do not fit into a standard liberal-conservative framework.

The pattern is matched elsewhere in the North American academy. Assertions that political attitudes are a joint function of personality, genetics and contextual factors, with dispositions interacting with environmental stimuli, seem increasingly common.\textsuperscript{151} And some preliminary cross-scale findings are already apparent in the current literature, such as the complex relationship reported between genetics, social networks and ideology,\textsuperscript{152} or the complementarity of psychological attention on threat and fear management with conclusions from biological research on ideological attachment, since the amygdala is believed to be involved in fear conditioning.\textsuperscript{153} Again, though, social, political and institutional factors remain more marginal to these research efforts and need to be brought into cross-scale accounts of ideological positioning. Claims abut these factors need to be delivered in more specific terms that are sensitive to specific causal and theoretical pathways in order to fully advance our joint understanding of ideological change.

But asymmetry is equally visible in the more discourse-centric European academy. Van Dijk offers an authentically “multidisciplinary” effort to study ideology, yet one which remains heavily focused on the discourse analytic methods with which van Dijk has most been associated.\textsuperscript{154} Cognition and social institutions are incorporated into van Dijk’s approach at the theoretical level, with considerable gains in causal and conceptual

\textsuperscript{149} Jost, Federico and Napier, 2013, p. 234
\textsuperscript{150} Edelman, 1977; Wuthnow, 1989; Balkin 1998; Snow, 2004; Tarrow, 2013.
\textsuperscript{151} e.g. Mondak et al., 2010
\textsuperscript{152} Settle et al., 2010
\textsuperscript{153} Phillips and LeDoux, 1992
\textsuperscript{154} Van Dijk, 1998
precision, but empirical research on specific psychological causes of ideology is largely absent. Freeden’s recent effort to bring analysis of the role of emotion into his account of ideology also involves only limited engagement with recent psychological work on emotion and politics. And despite the widespread interest of discourse-centric scholars in the strategic action of individuals engaging in political struggles, they have generally not incorporated evidence from political and social psychology regarding the actual motivations and traits that drive such behaviour. In general, most examination of the actual political thinking of both elite and ordinary actors in the European academy has eschewed psychological research on the mental processes which make up such thinking, resulting in a fundamental vagueness on the question of why different individuals who exist in similar overarching cultures adopt the different ideological beliefs and attitudes they do.

The literature thus seems to again suffer from inadequate integration. The broad asymmetrically focused-upon realms of discourse and psychology have obvious and deep complementarity at many points: core ideological processes like framing, social categorization and the broader linguistic construction of perceptions are vitally both discursive and psychological. And the growing interest in North American psychology in narrative and other complex semantic structures, and in European scholarship in emotion, illustrates the existence of some especially obvious openings for connection. Yet fragmentation of research along disciplinary and geographical lines has thus far stymied efforts to build genuinely holistic accounts of ideology. Instead, theorists work almost from scratch in theorizing phenomena like discourse or emotion, neglecting the much more extensive work that already exists in other disciplines on these topics.

In short, the literature on ideology still lacks a theory of ideology which incorporates: a) the individual genetic, physiological and psychological drivers that vary at the individual level and incline individuals towards or against certain ideas, and b) the political struggles, institutional relationships, social networks, discursive devices and

155 Freeden, 2013c
157 Freeden, 2008; Freeden, 2013b. See also: Balkin, 1998, pp. 8-4
158 Hammack, 2008, p. 228
159 Haidt, Graham, and Joseph, 2009; Hammack, 2008
160 Freeden, 2013c
semantic configurations that vary at the level of social context and present individuals with particular ideas and certain fields of ideological possibilities.

While explanations of ideological attachment and change are always going to reflect the expertise and foci of the analyst, we suggest that an integrative basic model could be formulated as a starting point for future research. Such a basic model could integrate existing knowledge of the individual and social causal mechanisms that shape ideologies more comprehensively. Individual determinants, as the literature surveyed here suggests, include psychological predispositions that motivate an individual to adopt certain ideological views, such as the epistemic, existential and relational motives described by Jost, Federico, and Napier, the drive towards epistemic satisfaction described by Boudon, the need to avoid cognitive dissonance famously identified by Festinger, the interpersonal attachment styles formed in early life highlighted by Weber and Federico, and perhaps the unconscious needs and anxieties postulated by some psychoanalytic approaches. Genetic or physiological factors may underpin these psychological drivers or may have independent effects on ideological attachment of their own. But individual determinants of ideology go beyond such foundational psychological and biological drives. The basic cognitive resources individuals possess – their concepts, frameworks, heuristics, forms of reasoning and skills - are also critical. And relatedly, so too are their existing ideologies (often providers of basic cognitive resources), including their existing conceptions of self and group identities and interests, and the basic material self-interests which underpin these.

But such individual determinants operate under the influence of a wide range of social determinants. Individuals’ personal cognitive resources are acquired primarily through social interaction and the learning of discursive resources - as these are internalised they enable, constrain and structure perception and reflection. Social interaction also exposes individuals to the vast majority of actual descriptive and

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161 Festinger 1957; Žižek, 1996; Boudon 1999; Glynos, 2001; Weber and Federico 2007; Jost, Federico and Napier 2013
162 van Dijk, 1998; Rosenberg, 1988
163 Freedren, 1996; Freedren, 2013a; van Dijk, 1998; van Dijk, 2013; Fairclough, 2010; Billig, 1991; Skinner, 2002; Wuthnow, 1989
normative content that defines their ideologies,\textsuperscript{164} and in the communication of such descriptive and normative content, individuals are exposed to a range of discursive/rhetorical devices, such as frames and narratives, as well as participatory practices and rituals which can encourage certain ideological conceptions.\textsuperscript{165} And just as critically, all individuals are socially positioned in a certain strategic context: an ideological environment defined by the live political issues, the existing distribution of ideologies, institutions and social networks, and the political and technological opportunities for certain forms of ideological production and interaction.\textsuperscript{166}

Crucially, these factors simultaneously shape each other in complex multilevel feedbacks. Individual determinants may indeed, as Jost, Federico and Napier suggest, create an elective affinity in individuals for particular ideological positions available in social discourse. But that social discourse offers them a finite (though broad) range of possible notions and ideological positions to internalize. And the particular groups and contexts individuals find themselves in tilt the table, by presenting some positions as more ‘mainstream’, ‘common sense’ or otherwise attractive than others. The way in which individuals are positioned in certain social networks and movements thus becomes crucial. And particular individuals, groups and institutions engaging in strategic political actions manipulate discourses and disseminate particular claims in ways that play on others’ underlying cognitive motives so as to encourage internalization of certain ideological notions.

This is, obviously, only a starting point in thinking about the multi-level interacting mechanisms behind ideological change, and we assume that further categories of causes at the individual and social level could be delineated. But the breadth of this brief taxonomy illustrates how far we are from fully understanding the interconnections between these various factors. Such understanding is a potential product of the broad field of ideological analysis and should be a core ambition of that field. But it will require theorists to cross disciplinary and continental boundaries in their efforts to attain it.

Even partial efforts to integrate ideology research in this way are ambitious. But a truly integrative effort to theorise ideology would still leave considerable room for

\textsuperscript{164} Boudon, 1989; Hochschild, 2001; Hammack, 2008; Collins, 1998
\textsuperscript{165} Finlayson, 2012; Wodak and Meyer, 2009
\textsuperscript{166} Skinner 1974; Freedon 1996; Howarth, Norval, and Stavrakakis 2000
variation in epistemological, methodological, conceptual, theoretical and motivational commitments between different communities of ideology scholars. And the pay-off could be enormous: accelerating the contemporary resurgence in the study of ideology across the humanities and social sciences, and radically enhancing scholars’ capacities to properly theorise the role of ideas in political action and social change.

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In one study, only the issues of slavery and civil rights briefly necessitate a second dimension for the mapping of US political attitudes (Stimson, 2004). A related variant of the one-dimensional characterization of ideologies more common in popular discussions than in the academic literature adopts a single left-right dimension, but varies an individual’s left-right placement by issue domain.

Follow-up investigation of Rokeach’s factors provides a mixed picture, with his equality dimension holding up well but his freedom dimension failing on a number of fronts (e.g. Braithwaite, 1997)

At the same time, to emphasize his continued engagement with lower-dimension spatial approaches, Haidt groups his six foundations into two overarching sets: individualizing norms and binding norms (Haidt, Graham, and Joseph, 2009).

Jost, Federico, and Napier (2006, pp. 310-11) offer an explicit defence of the cross-cultural applicability of a liberal-conservative unidimensional model. But, aside from being very limited in geographical scope, this defence conflates the plausible claim that *some sort* of unidimensional model is deployed across cultures with specific justification of a *common liberal-conservative* dimension. Indeed, Jost, Federico and Napier’s evidence from Germany and the Netherlands shows the ‘left’ associated with socialism/communism, not liberalism.

It’s also worth noting that some approaches, (e.g. Elster, 1982 or Fairclough, 2001) are not centrally concerned with modelling the content of individual ideologies at all.