

The Relationship Between Need for Closure and Conservative Beliefs in Western and Eastern Europe

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This work explored the hypothesis that need for closure is associated with the adoption of conservative ideology. Two different studies on eastern and western European samples (Polish and Flemish) supported the hypothesis that need for closure—as measured by Webster and Kruglanski's (1994) Need for Closure Scale—is related to conservative beliefs. However, in the second study, a negative relationship between need for closure and economic conservatism in the Polish sample was noted, whereas a positive relationship occurred in the Flemish sample. These results may be accounted for by the Need for Simple Structure factor of Neuberg, Judice, and West (1997) and by specific rather than non-specific epistemic processes.

KEY WORDS: conservatism, cross-cultural differences, need for closure, motivated social cognition, political beliefs

The relationship between cognitive functioning and conservative beliefs has recently been studied by proponents of the motivated social cognition approach to political psychology (e.g., Jost, Glaser, & Kruglanski, in press). Persons having low levels of motivation to process information would be more likely to support conservative ideologies because these rely on tradition, are aimed at (societal) stability, and imply the avoidance of ambiguity caused by change. Jost et al. (in press) mention the need for closure as a motivated cognition variable that provides a theoretical link to conservative ideological contents. In line with this, Kimmelmeier (1997) showed a positive association between need for closure and right-wing

political preferences. However, that study only reported analyses of total scores on the Need for Closure Scale (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994) and a limited set of indicators of conservative ideology. The aim of our two studies on Polish and Flemish adult samples is to show the relationships between the various facet scales of the Need for Closure Scale and various indicators of conservative ideology.

The presence of samples of different cultures is also an opportunity to show that the relationship between need for closure and conservative ideology is highly contextual and culture specific. Such a demonstration would substantiate the hypothesis that lack of motivation to process information can be differentially related to the same ideological contents in different cultures, irrespective of the fact that these contents can be classified as ideologically right-wing or left-wing.

Individual Differences in the Need for Closure

In an effort to unify cognitive and motivational notions, Kruglanski (1989) developed the theory of lay epistemics, whereby knowledge and beliefs are arrived at through a motivated search for information. A central motivational construct in this theory is the need for cognitive closure, which refers to the desire for *any* firm belief on a given topic, as opposed to further ambiguity. The need for closure may instill two sequential phases in a person: a tendency toward urgency, and a tendency toward permanence. These two phases can also be construed as inclinations to seize quickly on closure and then to protect the answer just obtained—that is, to freeze onto the structure already obtained. Kruglanski and Webster (1996) postulated that a demarcation point separating the “seizing” phase from the “freezing” phase is the juncture at which “a belief crystallized and turned from a hesitant conjecture to a subjectively firm fact” (p. 266).

The term “need” is used to denote a motivated tendency or proclivity, and implies that closure may not be desired in all situations (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). In some circumstances people may strive to attain closure, whereas in other situations they may show little preference for it. Situational forces such as time pressure, environmental noise, or dullness of a task may activate a desire for closure. But, according to Kruglanski, DeGrada, Mannetti, Atash, and Webster (1997) and Webster and Kruglanski (1994), need for closure may also reflect a dimension of stable individual differences, a unitary latent variable potentially manifested in a variety of ways. A person with a high level of need for closure prefers order and predictability, is decisive, closed-minded, and occasionally feels discomfort with ambiguity.

The “seizing” and “freezing” trends may affect not only information processing but also, indirectly, the multiple social-psychological phenomena that information processing possibly mediates. Need for closure has been found to induce the creation and usage of abstract mental representations (e.g., schemata, prototypes, attitudes, stereotypes); hence, it influences the way in which an individual thinks about, feels about, acts toward, and talks about other people.

A Motivational Account of Political Ideology

Conservative political beliefs have a motivational basis that affects both the form and content of these beliefs (see Jost et al., in press). Some researchers (e.g., Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Kunda & Sinclair, 1999) have distinguished between directional and non-directional motives that accompany the development of beliefs. Directional motives reflect the desire to reach a specific conclusion, whereas non-directional motives reflect the desire to arrive at any conclusion, independent of its content. Both motives are assumed to affect belief formation by determining the extent of information processing (Mayseless & Kruglanski, 1987), leading to a selective exposure to information (Frey, 1986), and having an impact on other aspects of information processing (Kruglanski, 1996). The lay epistemic theory holds that the rigidity of ideological attitudes may be manifested in various ideological contents, which are not necessarily restricted to right-wing conservatism. Jost, Kruglanski, and Simon (1999) therefore suggested that a non-directional motive, such as need for closure, could lead one to express beliefs that are either liberal or conservative, depending on one's chronically accessible ideology. Chronic accessibility is related to a variety of situational factors, such as childhood environment, rules, cultural principles and values, and political views of important reference groups. In other words, people adopt the contents of ideologies when they are easily accessible in their belief system.

However, Jost et al. (in press) also suggest that non-directional and directional motives are linked in the direction of conservative ideology. According to Jost et al., the motive to achieve stable knowledge in general is well served by ideas that are conservative in content. The content of conservative beliefs (e.g., tendency to preserve the status quo, to maintain status or power distinction, or to deprecate victims and outsiders) realizes the general desire for certainty very well, because it supports epistemic stability, clarity, and order. Hence, people with high need for closure should also prefer the specific conservative content over liberal contents that support instability, ambiguity, and chaos.

Hence, Jost et al. (in press) argue that conservatism can be characterized by means of a universal set of rules for organizing and processing information about social reality. This set of rules would apply to conservatism stemming from personality and individual differences (such as authoritarianism, dogmatism, intolerance of ambiguity, and ideological polarity) as well as to conservatism following from an attempt to satisfy epistemic and existential needs (such as need for cognitive closure, regulatory focus, and terror management). Thus, Jost et al. argue that the formal rules that dictate how judgments about the social world are formed can be reduced to conservatism in the cognitive, not traditional, sense. These researchers see cognitive conservatism as concerning a grossly simplified perception of the world (see also Jost et al., 1999).

The hypotheses of Jost et al. (in press) are reminiscent of most "traditional" definitions of conservatism. These definitions also stress the fact that people who

use overly simplified perspectives are more likely to subject themselves to authorities, irrespective of the fact that these authorities are represented by persons, rules, laws, or principles (e.g., Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Altemeyer, 1998; Conover & Feldman, 1981; Rokeach, 1960; Wilson, 1973). In other words, many of these authors seem to implicitly assume a positive relationship between conservative beliefs and “cognitive conservatism.”

Need for Closure and Political Beliefs

Webster and Kruglanski (1994) argued that need for closure shares some commonalities with variables previously studied in the domain of political psychology, such as authoritarianism, cognitive complexity, and intolerance of ambiguity. Some aspects of authoritarianism, for example, are partly related to need for closure (e.g., rigidity, conventionalism, intolerance of those who violate conventional norms), whereas others are not (e.g., exaggerated assertion of power, superstition, preoccupation with sexual goings-on). However, relative to these “political” variables, need for closure is also unique in several major aspects. Not surprisingly, then, Webster and Kruglanski were able to obtain moderate correlations between need for closure and authoritarianism, dogmatism, Eysenck’s (1954) intolerance of ambiguity scale, and cognitive complexity in a sample of students. Moreover, in a German student sample, Kemmelmeier (1997) obtained a positive correlation between need for closure and an index of conservative political orientation that comprised four items measuring right-wing, conservative, left-wing, and socialist orientation. He also obtained a significant linear trend between need for closure and the right-wing orientation of the political party a student would vote for if elections were held the next day.

In recent years, a vast amount of research on need for closure has concentrated on topics pivotal to the development of political beliefs. According to some investigations, people who score high on need for cognitive closure make more stereotypical judgments (Dijksterhuis, van Knippenberg, Kruglanski, & Schaper, 1996), exhibit impression primacy effects (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), resist persuasion (Kruglanski, Webster, & Klem, 1993), and are less likely to assimilate new information into existing beliefs (Ford & Kruglanski, 1995). These investigations show an impact of need for closure on variables that have been previously related to conservative ideology. Hence, these results indirectly seem to confirm Jost et al.’s (in press) hypothesis that the content of conservative ideology holds promise of epistemic stability, clarity, and order, and thus should be preferred by people with high need for closure.

The Present Studies

The present studies are concerned with the relationship between individual differences in need for closure and conservative ideology. Empirical evidence for

this relationship was obtained only in Kimmelmeier's (1997) study, which used a rather small student sample ($N = 93$) and a limited set of indicators of conservative ideology. The present studies were conducted on heterogeneous samples of adults in Flanders and Poland. Moreover, Kimmelmeier's study only reported analyses of total scores on the Need for Closure Scale (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), leaving open the possibility of differential relationships between its various facet scales and conservative ideology. The distinction between these facet scales might be especially important because Neuberg and colleagues (Neuberg, Judice, & West, 1997; Neuberg, West, Judice, & Thompson, 1997) reported two orthogonal dimensions underlying the need for closure. Hence, it is possible that these dimensions relate differentially to conservative ideology.

Moreover, Kimmelmeier (1997) studied only the dimension of political conservatism, whereas the present studies pay attention to the differentiation between cultural and economic conservatism. This distinction has often been made in previous research (e.g., Eysenck, 1954; Middendorp, 1978; Wilson, 1973). The inclusion of Polish samples is important because Poland is one of the eastern European countries formerly ruled by a communist regime. Support for left-wing ideology may be called the traditional choice in these countries. In other words, people who do not want any change to the economic system would generally prefer economic-progressive beliefs. Thus, one would expect a positive relationship between "conservative cognition" and economic progressivism in Poland. Conversely, in Flanders one would expect a positive correlation between economic conservatism and "cognitive conservatism" because the free-market system is well established and therefore represents the traditional choice.

In Study 1 we investigated the relationships between need for closure (and its facet scales) and general conservative beliefs, left/right self-placement, and political party preference in Polish and Flemish adult samples. The first study was focused on general conservatism but did not distinguish between cultural and economic conservatism.

Study 1

Method

Participants. The Polish participants were 145 adult volunteers. The average age was 39.22 ($SD = 10.64$) and 46% were male. Most participants attended higher education (68%), 27% of them graduated from secondary school, and 5% left school at the age of 14. The Flemish sample ($N = 100$) was 51% male and the average age was 36.31 ($SD = 12.51$). Of the latter group, 67% attended higher education, 30% completed secondary school, and 3% left school at the age of 14. Participants in both samples were recruited by undergraduate students who asked their neighbors to volunteer. This procedure was used in order to obtain a heterogeneous sample.

Measures. Participants were asked to place themselves into one of nine categories, ranging from 1 (left-wing) to 9 (right-wing). Of the Polish participants, 27.4% indicated a number (1 to 4) on the left side of the self-placement scale, 18.5% indicated a neutral stance (5), and 54% indicated a number (6 to 9) on the right side of the scale. Of the Flemish participants, 36% indicated a number on the left side of the self-placement scale, 33% indicated a neutral stance, and 31% indicated a number on the right side of the scale.

We also asked participants to what extent they agreed with the program of the major political parties on 9-point scales. The six major Flemish parties (Agalev, CVP, SP, Vlaams Blok, VU, and VLD) are described by Van Hiel and Mervielde (2002); the seven major Polish parties (AWS, PO, PSL, SLD, UP, UPR, and UW) are described by Kaminski (2001). Ratings of the party programs were subjected to principal components analysis. In the Polish as well as the Flemish sample, the first principal component extracted (accounting for 39.1% and 33.5% of the variance in the Polish and Flemish samples, respectively) was interpreted as an ideological left/right dimension. High scores reflect agreement with the program of the right-wing parties and disagreement with the program of the left-wing parties. This political preference factor bore a significant relationship to the left/right self-placement scale ($r = .79$ and $.85$ in the Polish and Flemish samples, respectively).

Additionally, we administered a questionnaire designed to assess conservative beliefs. In the Polish sample, a questionnaire assessing right-wing political beliefs was administered (Boski, 1993). In the Flemish sample, participants completed the conservatism scale of the Current Political Beliefs Questionnaire (Van Hiel & Mervielde, 1996). Both questionnaires showed sufficient reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$ and $.78$, respectively), and they were designed to cover a wide range of political statements that were collected from national newspapers or arose from political debate. These statements referred to regional and specific issues, which allowed the construction of culturally relevant items that are representative of the political situation in each of the countries. The Flemish questionnaire therefore consisted of issues as diverse as immigrants, soft drugs, aid for Third World countries, and the independence of Flanders, whereas the Polish questionnaire consisted of items referring to unemployment, education, health care, and the environment.

Finally, the Need for Closure Scale (NFCS; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994) was administered in both samples. In the Polish sample, a version prepared by Kossowska (2002) was used; in the Flemish sample, the authorized Dutch version of the scale (Cratylus, 1995) was administered. The NFCS consists of 42 items divided into five domains: (1) preference for order and structure in the environment, (2) predictability of future contexts, (3) decisiveness of judgments and choices, (4) affective discomfort occasioned by ambiguity, and (5) closed-mindedness. Our previous analyses (Kossowska, Van Hiel, Chun, & Kruglanski, 2002) of the structure of the NFCS, which included the present data, revealed that the best fitting model of need for closure in both the Polish ($N = 340$) and the

Flemish ($N = 623$) sample was a one-factor hierarchical model with five correlated facets. The results were consistent with those obtained in other European studies (Mannetti, Pierro, Kruglanski, Taris, & Bezinovic, 2002). Further, the reliability of the NFCS (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$ and $.78$ for the Polish and Flemish samples, respectively) was comparable with those reported by Webster and Kruglanski (1994) and Neuberg, Judice, and West (1997) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$ and $.87$, respectively). Given these results, each respondent's composite NFCS score was calculated by summing all items (after reverse-scoring the appropriate items).

Results

Principal components were extracted from the correlations among the political ideology measures (left/right self-placement, left/right political party preference, conservative political beliefs) (see Table 1). The first component accounted for 66% and 55% of the variance in the Polish and Flemish samples, respectively. A general factor was calculated and used in further analyses as an indicator of conservative beliefs.

As shown in Table 2, the need for closure, as well as many of its facets, bore significant relationships to ideology. Specifically, need for closure correlated positively with the left/right self-placement scale (Polish sample, $r = .22$, $p < .05$;

Table 1. Factor Loadings of the Political Ideology Variables on a General Factor (Study 1)

Scale	Polish sample ($N = 145$)	Flemish sample ($N = 100$)
Left/right self-placement	.78	.87
Left/right party preference	.66	.71
Conservative political beliefs	.78	.89

Table 2. Correlations Between Need for Closure and Political Variables (Study 1)

	NFC	Order	Predict	Dec	Ambig	Closed
Polish sample ($N = 145$)						
Conservatism	.22*	.28**	.26**	.15	.24*	.22*
Left/right party preference	.24*	.26**	.12	.11	.16	.24*
Left/right self-placement	.22*	.28**	.24*	.10	.17*	.21*
Factor pertaining to all political variables	.34***	.38***	.23*	.17*	.22*	.25**
Flemish sample ($N = 100$)						
Conservatism	.52***	.46***	.45***	.18	.37***	.04
Left/right party preference	.35***	.36***	.27**	.03	.33***	.04
Left/right self-placement	.38***	.29**	.17	.13	.32**	.06
Factor pertaining to all political variables	.42***	.40***	.38***	.11	.36***	.10

Note. NFC = total score on the NFCS. Facet scale abbreviations: Order, need for order; Predict, need for predictability; Dec, decisiveness; Ambig, intolerance of ambiguity; Closed, closed-mindedness.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Flemish sample, $r = .38$, $p < .001$), left/right political party preference (Polish sample, $r = .24$, $p < .05$; Flemish sample, $r = .35$, $p < .001$), and conservative political beliefs (Polish sample, $r = .22$, $p < .05$; Flemish sample, $r = .52$, $p < .001$). We also obtained significant correlations between need for closure and the general factor pertaining to all ideological variables in the Polish and Flemish samples ($r = .34$ and $.42$, respectively; $ps < .001$). Analyses of the NFCS facet scales revealed that decisiveness did not correlate with any political variable in either sample, with the exception of a slight but significant correlation with the general factor pertaining to all ideological variables in the Polish sample ($r = .17$, $p < .05$). In the Flemish sample, closed-mindedness did not correlate with any political variable. All other facets—need for order, need for predictability, and intolerance of ambiguity—showed positive correlations with the political variables in each sample.

Our data support the Adorno et al. (1950) original hypothesis of a linear association between political ideology and cognition. The results also are consistent with those obtained by Kimmelmeier (1997) on a student sample indicating that right-wing political orientations are related to high levels of need for cognitive closure.

Study 2

The general purpose of Study 2 is to empirically integrate the theoretically different concepts of conservative political beliefs and show that they all are predicted by need for closure. In particular, our second study is aimed at clarifying whether need for closure relates to cultural and economic conservatism.

The distinction between cultural and economic conservatism has often been made in previous research (e.g., Eysenck, 1954; Middendorp, 1978; Wilson, 1973). In the economic domain, progressive ideology emphasizes equality and rejects inequality with respect to power, income, and opportunities. Economic-progressive ideology therefore favors issues such as worker consciousness, governmental economic intervention, and union consciousness. In economic conservative ideology, people adhere to capitalist ideology and believe that private initiative and competition among individuals should not be limited. In the cultural domain, progressive ideology refers to the freedom to arrange life according to one's own insights, whereas conservative ideology is related to the endorsement of traditional values and norms. Cultural conservative ideology thus favors issues such as an authoritarian parent-child relationship, traditional work ethic, and conventional female roles (see Middendorp, 1978). In a study on Flemish and Polish samples, we (Van Hiel, Duriez, & Kossowska, 2002) have reported sufficient internal consistency of the economic and cultural conservatism scales we used here.

As has been mentioned, one would expect a positive relationship between “conservative cognition” and economic progressivism in Poland, whereas in

Flanders one would expect a positive correlation between “cognitive conservatism” and economic conservatism because the free-market system represents the traditional choice.

With respect to cultural conservatism in the Polish context, it has been noted that nowadays authoritarian people may adhere to other conventional alternatives such as nationalism and religiosity (Krauss, 2002; McFarland, Ageyev, & Djintcharadze, 1996; Van Hiel, Kossowska, & Mervielde, 2000). Expressions of “cultural conservatism” in Polish society may therefore be quite analogous to the western European concept. Hence, we expect to find a positive relationship between need for closure and cultural conservatism in Poland as well as in Flanders.

The use of the economic and cultural conservatism scales in the present samples permits us to illustrate that need for closure is positively related to the traditional, predominant views present within a given political context, irrespective of the fact that these views can be classified as ideologically right-wing or left-wing.

Method

Participants. The Polish participants were 253 adult volunteers, 46.5% male, whose average age was 42.4 ($SD = 12.5$). Most participants graduated from secondary school (61%), 32% of them attended higher education, and 5.2% left school at the age of 14. The Flemish sample ($N = 222$) consisted of 53% males, with an average age of 37.4 ($SD = 13.9$). Of the latter group, 58% attended higher education, 30% completed secondary school, and 12% left school at the age of 14. Participants in both samples were recruited by undergraduate students who asked their neighbors to volunteer.

Measures. We applied a 6-point scale of left/right-wing political preference that eliminated the neutral position (point 0) in order to force the participants to place themselves on the left or right side of the political continuum. Hence, participants were asked to place themselves into one of six categories, ranging from extreme left-wing to extreme right-wing. Of the Polish participants, 1% placed themselves on the extreme left-wing position, 11% on the left-wing position, 29% on the center left-wing position, 33% on the center right-wing position, 25% on the right-wing position, and 1% on the extreme right-wing position. Of the Flemish participants, 10% placed themselves on the extreme left-wing position, 23% on the left-wing position, 25% on the center left-wing position, 13% on the center right-wing position, 17% on the right-wing position, and 12% on the extreme right-wing position.

We also asked participants to indicate on 9-point scales to what extent they agreed with the program of the major political parties. In both the Polish and Flemish samples, the first principal component extracted from the correlations among political party preferences was interpreted as a dimension of left/right

Table 3. Factor Loadings of the Political Ideology Variables on a General Factor (Study 2)

	Polish sample ($N = 253$)	Flemish sample ($N = 222$)
Left/right self-placement	.76	.72
Left/right party preference	.56	.61
Cultural conservatism	.56	.77
Economic conservatism	-.79	.67
Right-wing authoritarianism	.68	.86
Right-wing tendency in ideology	.88	N.A.
Right-wing tendency in economy	-.73	N.A.

Note. N.A. = not administered.

political orientation. High scores reflect agreement with the program of the right-wing parties and disagreement with the program of the left-wing parties. This political preference factor bore a significant relationship to the left/right self-placement scale ($r = .78$ and $.76$ in the Polish and Flemish samples, respectively).

Additionally, we administered various measures of economic and cultural conservatism. In the Polish sample, we administered the Political Values Scale, a questionnaire assessing left/right orientations on ideological and economic dimensions (Kossowska & Marković, 2001) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$).¹ In both samples, we administered Altemeyer's Right-Wing Authoritarianism scale (Koralewicz, 1987), the Middendorp Conservatism Scale (De Witte, 1990), and the NFCS.

Results

Principal components were extracted from the correlations among the political ideology measures (see Table 3). The first component accounted for 56% and 54% of the variance in the Polish and Flemish samples, respectively. A general factor was calculated and used in further analyses as an indicator of conservative beliefs.

In Table 4 we present the correlations between the need for closure and other measures of political beliefs, as well as a general factor pertaining to all of the

¹ The questionnaire served as a basis of Boski's (1993) model of political mentality. On the basis of this questionnaire, he assumed that the traditional left/right distinction is an oversimplified construct, because political orientation may manifest differently on ideological and economic dimensions. It has been taken for granted that the political left entails a socialist leaning (economic equality) and a non-religious justification to this line of thought. Yet there is no logically inherent reason why approval of socioeconomic equality should correlate with non-religious (secular) and cosmopolitan orientation. Similarly, being on the economic right does not imply automatic adherence to a nationalist-religious ideology. Therefore, Boski suggested that (1) there is a socioeconomic left/right dimension, contrasting socialist welfare-state protectionism (left) with capitalist market economy (right), and (2) there is an identity left/right: secular-European (left) versus religious-national (right) orientation. Boski suggested that the present duality is a Polish historical phenomenon of our days. Western researchers had similar ideas years ago (e.g., Eysenck, 1954; Middendorp, 1978).

Table 4. Correlations Between Need for Closure and Political Variables (Study 2)

	Polish sample (N = 253)	Flemish sample (N = 222)
Left/right self-placement	.26**	.32**
Left/right party preference	.22*	.34***
Cultural conservatism	.44***	.26**
Economic conservatism	-.30***	.22*
Right-wing authoritarianism	.31***	.34***
Right-wing ideological orientation	.24*	N.A.
Right-wing economic orientation	-.33***	N.A.
Factor pertaining to all political variables	.38***	.34***

Note. N.A. = not administered.
*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

political variables. The results indicated that need for closure correlated positively with left/right self-placement ($r = .26$ and $.32$ in the Polish and Flemish samples, respectively; $ps < .01$), left/right political party preference (Polish sample, $r = .22$, $p < .05$; Flemish sample, $r = .34$, $p < .001$), right-wing authoritarianism ($r = .31$ and $.34$ in the Polish and Flemish samples, respectively; $ps < .001$), and cultural conservatism (Polish sample, $r = .44$, $p < .001$; Flemish sample, $r = .26$, $p < .01$). As expected, economic conservatism correlated negatively with need for closure in the Polish sample, but positively in the Flemish sample (Polish sample, $r = -.30$, $p < .001$; Flemish sample, $r = .22$, $p < .05$). Need for closure also correlated with both factors from the Political Values Scale administered to the Polish sample: positively with right-wing ideology ($r = .24$, $p < .05$) and negatively with right-wing economy ($r = -.33$, $p < .001$). The latter results, obtained with a questionnaire referring to Polish political life, thus cross-validate the findings with the Middendorp scale, which was developed in the western European political context. A general factor pertaining to all political variables also correlated with need for closure ($r = .38$ and $.34$ in the Polish and Flemish samples, respectively; $ps < .001$). Because some authors have mentioned the possibility of curvilinear relationships between motivated cognition and ideology (e.g., Sidanius, 1988), we checked whether the inclusion of a quadratic component in a hierarchical regression model would contribute to explaining the data. These analyses for cultural and economic conservatism revealed high significance levels for the linear coefficient in the Polish and Flemish samples, whereas adding the quadratic component increased the predictable variance non-significantly ($\Delta Fs < .51$, not significant), with the exception of the relationship between need for closure and cultural conservatism in the Polish sample ($\Delta F = 3.22$, $p < .01$). These results thus reveal that the quadratic component is not important to explain the data.

Analyses of the NFCS facets revealed that need for order, need for predictability, and intolerance of ambiguity correlated highly and positively with all ideological variables (right-wing self-placement, right-wing political party

preference, conservative ideology, and authoritarianism) in both samples. Closed-mindedness correlated with all ideological variables only in the Polish sample. As expected, need for order, need for predictability, and closed-mindedness correlated negatively with economic conservatism in the Polish sample ($r_s = -.19$, $-.17$, and $-.24$, respectively; $p_s < .05$), whereas in the Flemish sample, need for order, need for predictability, and intolerance of ambiguity correlated positively with economic conservatism ($r = .26$, $p < .01$; $r = .24$, $p < .05$ and $r = .24$, $p < .05$, respectively). Additionally, right-wing economy also correlated negatively with need for order and closed-mindedness in the Polish sample ($r = -.23$, $p < .05$ and $r = -.28$, $p < .01$, respectively). In both samples, decisiveness did not show a strong relationship with any political variable. The results are given in Table 5.

Socialization theories assume that the basis of many political values and attitudes is instantiated during adolescence and even earlier (e.g., Alwin & Krosnick, 1991). Given the fact that especially the older part of the Polish sample has experienced the communist regime, one would expect that older Poles endorse more firmly communist economic beliefs, regardless of their level of need for closure. This line of reasoning was confirmed by the results. Partialing out the effect of age led to weaker correlations between need for closure and economic conservatism ($r = -.22$ instead of $-.30$) and between need for closure and Boski's measure of right-wing economics ($r = -.21$ instead of $-.33$). The effect of age

Table 5. Correlations Between NFCS Facets and Political Variables (Study 2)

	Order	Predict	Dec	Ambig	Closed
Polish sample ($N = 253$)					
Left/right self-placement	.20*	.22*	.17*	.18*	.24*
Left/right party preference	.29***	.24*	.15	.20*	.26**
Cultural conservatism	.33***	.26**	.09	.31***	.27**
Economic conservatism	-.19*	-.17*	-.12	-.13	-.24*
Right-wing authoritarianism	.43***	.28**	.19*	.17*	.28**
Right-wing ideology	.30***	.25**	.19*	.22*	.26**
Right-wing economy	-.23*	.10	.12	.09	-.28**
Factor pertaining to all political variables	.32***	.27**	.16	.22*	.31***
Flemish sample ($N = 222$)					
Left/right self-placement	.32**	.28**	.15	.32**	.17
Left/right party preference	.22*	.25*	.12	.28**	.16
Cultural conservatism	.24*	.37***	.10	.44***	.19*
Economic conservatism	.26**	.24*	.10	.24*	.07
Right-wing authoritarianism	.41***	.26**	.12	.34***	.22*
Factor pertaining to all political variables	.28**	.26**	.16	.41***	.18

Note. Facet scale abbreviations: Order, need for order; Predict, need for predictability; Dec, decisiveness; Ambig, intolerance of ambiguity; Closed, closed-mindedness.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

remained significant after partialing out need for closure for economic conservatism ($r = -.18, p < .05$) and for Boski's measure of right-wing economics ($r = -.25, p < .01$).

Discussion

Our results reveal a positive correlation between need for closure and conservatism in the Flemish as well as the Polish sample. In Study 1, this relationship was obtained for left/right self-placement, political party preference, and general conservatism. In Study 2, this relationship was replicated for left/right self-placement, political party preference, cultural conservatism, and right-wing authoritarianism. However, in line with our expectations, a diverging pattern of results was obtained for economic conservatism. In particular, a negative relationship between need for closure and economic conservatism was obtained in the Polish sample, whereas a positive relationship emerged in the Flemish sample. The relationships between need for closure and ideology were replicated for the facet scales of order, predictability, and intolerance of ambiguity, but decisiveness failed to show a meaningful relationship with conservatism.

Cultural Dependency of Need-for-Closure Effects

The empirical results in the Flemish samples, as well as those of other studies (Kimmelmeier, 1997; Webster and Kruglanski, 1994), seem to confirm at first glance the existence of a general tendency for advocates of conservative political beliefs toward simplification and structuralization of the environment. Participants with high need for closure placed themselves on the right-wing side of the self-placement scale, supported right-wing parties, were more authoritarian, and revealed more conservative values. However, this interpretation might be biased because these studies were exclusively based on Western samples.

Unlike the results for cultural conservatism, the results in the Polish sample showed increasing levels of need for closure among people who have an economic-progressive orientation. These results are consistent with the lay epistemic theory (Kruglanski, 1989), which supports the contention that rigidity of ideological attitudes may be manifested with different ideological contents. Among people whose accessible ideological positions are communist, increasing need for closure results in a strengthened relationship between need for closure and left-wing orientation.

Our data illustrate that need for closure is positively related to the traditional, predominant views present within a given political context, irrespective of the fact that these views can be classified as ideologically right-wing or left-wing. In other words, these results undermine the claims of inherent epistemic properties of political ideology on the basis of their sheer content. The suggestion of various authors that right-wing beliefs inherently provide epistemic certainty is, in fact,

an artifact (e.g., Jost et al., in press). In particular, the fact that these right-wing beliefs constitute a dominant and easily accessible ideology in Western culture makes them tempting for individuals with high need for closure. Hence, the dominance or the tenure and “establishedness” of these beliefs in a particular culture are important here. Communist and Western conservative economic beliefs can be considered structurally equivalent insofar as they provide certainty because they tell the individual what the world is like, or because they provide clear standards. However, in another cultural context, these beliefs may be championed by people scoring low on need for closure because of their relativity and fluidity in that culture.

An anonymous reviewer suggested an alternative interpretation of these results. It is possible that people with high need for closure in the Polish sample might be attracted to left-wing economics because of its apparent simplicity. Such an effect could be due to the presence of many old communists who believe that the state should own all means of production. Conversely, even the most radical left-wingers in the Flemish sample have in mind a “tamed” kind of capitalism that reflects an intricate mixture of private property ownership, free markets, and government regulation. Thus, in Flanders, left-wing economic reasoning may be inherently more complex than in Poland and may explain why people with high need for closure prefer right-wing beliefs. As discussed below, this explanation is consistent with that of Neuberg and colleagues.

The Relationship Between Ideology and Freezing and Seizing Processes

After analyzing the structure of the NFCS, Neuberg, Judice, and West (1997) obtained a two-factor solution in which the first factor, Need for Simple Structure, includes items from the NFCS facets of need for order, need for predictability, and intolerance of ambiguity. The other factor, Decisiveness, comprises exactly the same items included in the NFCS facet of decisiveness.

On the basis of these psychometric analyses, Neuberg, Judice, and West (1997) advanced the hypothesis that the two primary orthogonal factors of the NFCS might map the seizing and freezing processes underlying the need for closure. The seizing process, characterized by an urgent desire to gain a quick non-specific solution, manifests itself as a preference for decisiveness. The freezing process, characterized by a desire to maintain with some degree of permanence the specific solution seized upon, has as its dispositional analogue a preference for simple structures.

It is striking that our results indicate that the scales that would load the need for structure (according to Neuberg and colleagues) bear significant relationships with conservatism, whereas the decisiveness scale, which would load another factor, does not show such a relationship. Thus, when applying Neuberg and colleagues' line of reasoning, our results would be accounted for by freezing processes and a desire for specific closure. One could argue that the present questionnaires capture participants' “frozen” ideologies and beliefs, which the partic-

ipants long ago seized upon. Individuals with high need for (simple) structure would thus adhere to the specific political views they were already holding. This process would then emanate from a desire for specific closure, exactly because it seeks to maintain these specific beliefs. An explanation based on freezing processes and need for specific closure clarifies why people uphold a view of the world consistent with their actual beliefs, even if they are transient. The freezing process strengthens two dispositions: (1) to store up the acquired knowledge, and (2) to safeguard the existing system of beliefs against some new, contradictory, and hence threatening information.

An interesting question concerns the decisiveness/indecisiveness dimension: Why does this dimension show scarcely a relationship with political beliefs in our samples? According to Neuberg and colleagues (1997), decisiveness captures individual differences in the desire to seize and non-specific closure. That is, decisiveness is thought of as referring not to specific contents, but rather to any possible solution. Because the rapidly seized information and the judgment formed on its basis are not instantly included in toughened cognitive structures, the individual is still ready to make changes and cognitive reevaluation. Because the seizing process does not account for the fact that information becomes a part of the knowledge system, it seems that the seizing process itself is not a basis for political beliefs.

Another possible explanation refers to operationalization of the decisiveness facet. The cross-cultural study of NFCS structure by Mannetti et al. (in press) showed that decisiveness was not significantly related to other facets of the scale. On the basis of data from several preliminary investigations, Mannetti et al. suggested that the independence of decisiveness in the present version of the scale is mostly due to an inadequate operationalization of the conceptual dimension. They argue that the decisiveness items describe the ability to reach a decision quickly, rather than the need to find an answer as soon as possible without too much worry about its validity (i.e., "seizing" upon the first available answer).

Our results have confirmed the importance of the need for closure in understanding the process of formulating and holding political beliefs. It has been assumed that need for closure affects conservative belief formation by facilitating the achievement of various goals (such as those associated with reducing uncertainty), and by engendering fixed and secure beliefs about social order (Jost et al., in press). However, the results obtained in the Polish sample provide evidence that the rigidity of ideological attitudes may be manifested with different ideological contents, and that this rigidity is not necessarily restricted to right-wing conservatism.

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