Conservative Distinctions:
Moral and Cultural Conservatism

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Introduction

There is general consensus that both the demand and the supply of political opinions may be understood as two-dimensional.[1] The first dimension usually brought to the fore is a socio-economic attitude dimension that revolves around issues of economic equality. The second is a socio-cultural attitude dimension that instead poses questions about individual freedom and the extent to which individuals should be allowed to determine how they live their lives.

While earlier research has often been relatively concordant as to how the socio-economic dimension can be understood, there has been less clarity regarding the socio-cultural attitude dimension. According to De Koster and Van der Waal (2007), several different attitudes or value orientations are clustered here, based on the argument that they tend to empirically coincide. It emerges in a study by Enelo (2013) that there is reason to differentiate between on the one hand attitudes that concern the preservation of traditional morals, and on the other hand attitudes concerning xenophobia and the preservation of nation-specific culture. Attitudes associated with these two clusters of opinions are understood as constituting indicators of a single uniform position along the socio-cultural attitude dimension. Studies in which this attitude dimension is examined using only indicators of moral issues tend for example to also draw conclusions concerning xenophobia or cultural issues nevertheless and vice versa.[2] In contrast, in this paper I will argue that there is reason to distinguish between the two and discuss how such a distinction can be conceptually understood and how it relates to social class and political party preference.

In the first section of the paper I describe the demand side of the political space based on research of Swedish conditions and discuss how attitude dimensions can be grasped as structured around opposite worldviews. The section also includes a discussion of how prior research has conceptualized the socio-cultural attitude dimension and concludes that the corresponding worldviews have been overburdened. In the following section I argue that the socio-cultural attitude dimension harbors two rather than one pair of opposite worldviews. These two pairs tend to coincide among socio-cultural liberals while the same is not true among socio-cultural conservatives. I the last section I discuss how the two socio-cultural conservative worldviews identified manifest and their causes.

A Socio-Cultural Attitude Dimension

Before the two aspects uncovered within this dimension are described, there is reason to describe the two-dimensional political space encompassing the socio-cultural attitude dimension. Adopting an attitude may be understood as a specific case of supply meeting demand (Bourdieu 1984:399) where political parties, among else, constitute the supply side. This supply should not be understood as consisting only of individual attitudes, but rather as different ways of understanding the social world, instruments of knowledge or principles of vision and division (Bourdieu 1984, 1991; Enelo 2013).

Understood as a two-dimensional space, capital volume and capital composition both influence the

[1]See for example Harrits et al. (2009), Lipset (1959), Inglehart (1997), Houtman (2003), Kitschelt (1997), Kriesi et al. (2012; 2008a), and Svallfors (2004).
[2] This is done for example by Kohn (1977), Inglehart (1997; Inglehart & Welzel 2005), Houtman (2003; Houtman et al. 2008), and Svallfors (2004, 2005).

political attitudes held (Enelo 2013).[3] Leftist socio-economic attitudes increase when total volume of capital is lower, while rightist socio-economic attitudes correspond with higher total volume. The tendency to hold leftist socio-economic attitudes also increases with the relative amount of cultural capital. It is this type of attitudes that mainly determine the choice to vote for parties in the left bloc or the right bloc. In respect of socio-cultural attitudes, liberal attitudes coincide with the amount of cultural capital and the weight of cultural capital possessed. Conversely, socio-culturally conservative attitudes correspond to low possession of cultural capital and capital composition in which cultural capital is relatively lightweight. These principles thus exhibit a homology with the first two dimensions of the social space at large (cf. Table 1).

Several scholars emphasize breadth of perspective as underlying a position along the socio-cultural attitude dimension, but such a proposition is inadequate to understand the difference between liberalism and conservatism (cf. Gabennesch 1972). Political attitudes, like other markers of lifestyle, can be understood as markers of taste (Bourdieu 1984), in this case, political taste, and indicate underlying principles of vision and division. In other words, what the socio-cultural attitude dimension brings together are opposing ways of understanding the world. These may be understood as constructed of various clusters of principles of vision and division.

Based on Gabennesch (1972), ways of apprehending the social world may be conceptualized as *worldviews*.[4] A socio-cultural conservative worldview, or authoritarianism in Gabennesch's terms, can be understood as a consequence of apprehending the social world as fixed rather than in process. Moral authority is taken as given and an absolute rather than as a consequence of social actions. And if parts of the social world appear beyond human influence, it tends to promote a sense of powerlessness and of being at the mercy of forces beyond one's control (cf. Kohn 1977). Such an outlook on the world can also lead to extrapunitiveness, adherence to the letter of the law, and advocacy of harsher punishments (Gabennesch 1972).

A socio-cultural conservative worldview can thus be understood as a consequence of a reified view of the social world (Berger & Luckmann 1967; Gabennesch 1972). This implies a forgetting of the history (Bourdieu 1977:78) of the moral and the cultural order. A narrow breadth of perspective can thus be understood as a part and a consequence of a socio-cultural conservative worldview, rather than the cause of such a worldview.

Lipset (1959) was one of the first to stress the existence of a socio-cultural attitude dimension, arguing that it was necessary to differentiate between economic liberalism and non-economic liberalism. Lipset describes non-economic liberalism as a tendency "to support, for example, civil liberties for political dissidents, civil rights for ethnic and racial minorities, internationalist foreign policies, and liberal immigration legislation" (Lipset 1959:485). In contrast, non-economic conservatism is characterized by the reverse. Lipset identifies this type of conservatism as flowing from the social situation of the lower classes. According to Lipset, a number of elements are typical of the working class, including low education, low participation in political organizations or in voluntary organizations of any type, isolated occupations and authoritarian family values and family patterns. Kohn (1977:189) similarly describes a dimension that goes from self-direction to conformity. The former consists of acting on one's own judgments and having a breadth of perspective, while the latter instead implies following the dictate of authority and intolerance to nonconformity. In a similar vein, Inglehart (1997) emphasizes individual liberty and self-expression, as a part of what he refers to as a postmaterialist value orientation, in contrast to a more survival-oriented materialism.

Houtman sums up the socio-cultural attitude dimension in a way that clearly shows the abundance of issues it contains:

People who find freedom of expression less important than maintaining the social order are also apt ... to have a problem with homosexuality, sexual liberty, and the decline of traditional gender roles

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[3] In a study of the Swedish space of political opinions (or field of consumption of political opinions), the space is examined by a multiple correspondence analysis (cf. Le Roux & Rouanet 2004) based on 16 variables: attitude toward: the reduction of the public sector; the reduction of social benefits; cutting taxes; selling state-owned business and public utilities; increasing the proportion of health care run by private interests; greater effort to promote independent schools; the introduction of child-rearing grants; the acceptance of fewer refugees; the introduction of a language test as a criterion for citizenship; working toward an environmentally friendly society; working toward a society in which Christian values are important; working toward a society that protects traditional Swedish values; working toward a society in which power is delegated from men to women; restriction of reproductive rights; allowing gay and lesbian couples to adopt children; and increasing the severity of prison sentences. The study uses the 2006 edition of The Swedish Election Studies. The data has been made available by Swedish National Data Services (SND) and was collected by Sören Holmberg, Henrik Oscarsson (Gothenburg University) and Statistics Sweden. Neither SND nor the principal investigators are responsible for the analyses presented in this paper (Enelo 2013).

[4] Inglehart (1997:8) describes postmodernization as a new worldview.

and tend to be in favour of strict sentences for criminal offences and against immigration from non-Western countries (Houtman 2003:11-2).

The multiplicity of issues encompassed within the socio-cultural attitude dimension is however rarely matched to the empirical indicators used when it is studied. Houtman includes attitudes towards immigration in the concept and also draws conclusions about attitudes towards xenophobia, even though the indicators used do not include such issues. Likewise, Inglehart (1990, 1997; Inglehart & Welzel 2005) and Kohn (1977) state that socio-cultural conservatives tend to have xenophobic elements, and do so unsupported by empirical evidence (Enelo 2013:89-93).

Figure 1.
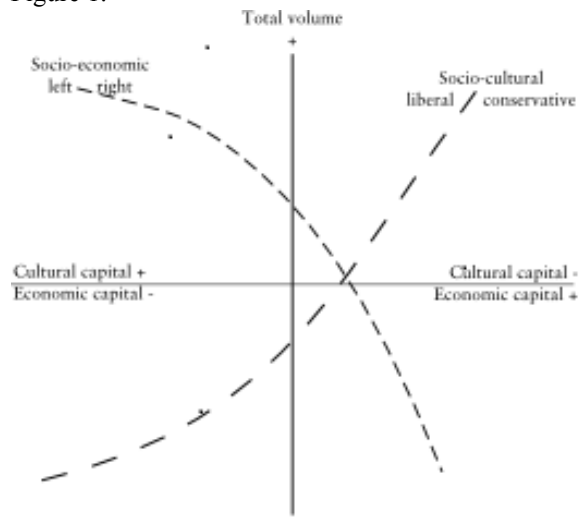
Conservative in the light of What?
The Case for a Split

In claiming that the socio-cultural attitude dimension cannot be understood as uniform, my point is that it harbors not only two opposing worldviews (liberal and conservative) but (at least) two couplets of worldviews. One sets conservative moral values against more liberal values, while the other instead sets conservative cultural values against more liberal ones. At the liberal end of the socio-cultural attitude dimension, these two tend to coincide, while they are separated at the conservative extreme.[5]

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[5] This distinction between moral and cultural conservatism have been obtained by factorial analysis as well as by multiple correspondence analysis. Through Euclidean classification, seven tangible constellations of opinions through which individuals combine opinions from the socio-cultural and the socio-economic attitude dimensions have been identified: socio-cultural liberal left, socio-cultural liberal right, socio-economic left, moral conservative left, moral conservative right, cultural conservative left and cultural conservative right (Enelo 2013). Six of these constellations are represented in Figure 2, Table 1 and Table 2.

The difference then lies in what people are striving to conserve. The dividing line is whether people are defending traditional moral values or the notion of a nation-specific culture. In the case of the former, moral conservatism, the threat is perceived as emanating from modern life per se and the primary object is to conserve this morality. Moral conservatives support Christian values and child-rearing benefit while advocating a more restrictive stance regarding abortion. In the case of the latter, the telling concept is cultural conservatism; cultural conservatives are not primarily advocating traditional morals, but rather the notion of nation-specific values. The threat to their own way of life is perceived as emanating from other cultures drawing too close. Cultural conservatives believe in acceptance of fewer refugees and language requirements for citizenship, defend Swedish values, and wish to institute harsher punishments for criminal offenses. Restricting reproductive rights and defending Christian values are not considered as important.

In terms of political opinions, the difference between the political right and left bloc may, as mentioned, be understood as constituted of socio-economic attitudes. First and foremost, socio-cultural attitudes influence which political party within the political blocs the individual supports. Combined with leftist socio-economic attitudes, conservative socio-cultural attitudes (of the moral as well as the cultural variety) tend to lead to higher support for the Social Democratic Party than for the Left Party or Green Party. In other words, the distinction between moral conservatism and cultural conservatism seems not to be especially significant to party selection within the left bloc. This distinction does, however, make a difference to party selection within the right bloc among socio-cultural conservatives. When conservative opinions are held along with rightist socio-economic attitudes, cultural conservatives are most likely to vote for the Moderate Party, while moral conservatives are more distinguished by voting for the Christian Democrats.

However, socio-cultural attitudes are significant not only to party selection within the ideological blocs – they also give rise to voting that contradicts personal socio-economic attitudes when individuals support a party whose socio-economic attitudes differ from their own. Socio-cultural attitudes engender movements between the two political blocs and beyond the blocs (cf. Table 1). The most distinct tendency for conservative attitudes is that they induce individuals with leftist socio-economic attitudes to vote for rightist parties. Among individuals who

combine leftist socio-economic attitudes with morally conservative attitudes, 7.6 percent report that they support the Christian Democrats (and they make up a significant portion of the party's supporters). Among those with culturally conservative attitudes, 10.1 percent support the Moderate Party. Conservative socio-cultural attitudes also give rise to support for the Sweden Democrats, primarily in relation to the cultural conservative left (3.9 percent). At the other end of the socio-cultural attitude dimension, liberal attitudes instead engender movement towards the Green Party, despite rightist socio-economic attitudes (7.2 percent).

Figure 2. Socio-cultural worldviews, differentiated by socio-economic attitudes
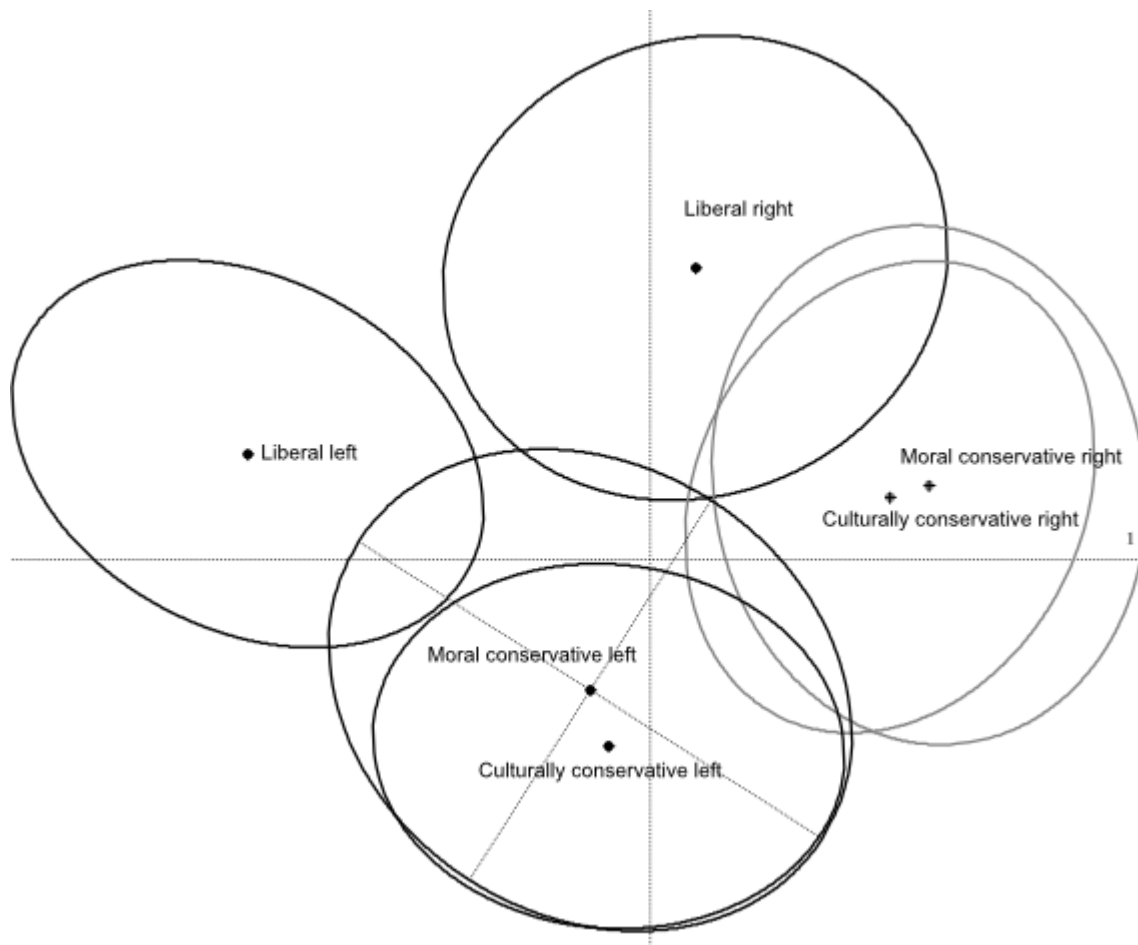
As mentioned, socio-cultural conservatives tend to have a low amount of capital and a capital composition dominated by economic capital. Nevertheless, the difference between cultural conservatives and moral conservatives may be seen in terms of both total amount of capital and capital composition (cf. Table 2). Cultural conservatives generally possess less capital than moral conservatives: cultural conservatives are more likely than moral conservatives to belong to the working class and less likely to belong to the upper middle class. The capital possession of cultural conservatives is also more likely to be dominated by economic capital, while the capital possessed by moral conservatives is instead dominated by cultural capital.

That cultural liberalism and moral liberalism coincide illustrates that there is still reason to regard the distinct worldviews revealed here as part of a larger socio-cultural attitude dimension. The importance of not blithely joining cultural conservatism and moral conservatism is however glaringly apparent at the conservative extreme of the attitude dimension. These are two worldviews whose holders tend to be of different ages, posses different amounts of

capital and capital compositions, and they tend to vote for different political parties (Enelo 2013).

Conservatisms as Worldviews

Thus far, we have established that the socio-cultural attitude dimension carries two different aspects with diverse empirical characteristics that give rise to two different worldviews at the conservative end of the attitude dimension. This section describes how these two are manifest and their causes.

Moral conservatism can be understood as conservatism grounded in the nostalgia for a traditional moral order of things (Svallfors 2005). Religious faith can partly be understood as the locus of this kind of conservatism, providing a frame of reference for understanding (Hunsberger & Jackson 2005) and implying that we are dealing with a religious worldview combined with a moral traditionalism. The corresponding worldview can thus be understood as stemming from Christian religiosity as a form of a traditional grand narrative (De Koster & Van der Waal 2007).

The morality championed, and the rejection of the diversification of lifestyles, is not restricted to religious faith. It can also be grounded in moral intolerance (cf. Napier & Jost 2008), whether accompanied by religious commitment or not. According to Bourdieu (1984:433), this type of conservatism may depend upon individuals' movements in the social space.[6] In such cases, this refers to individuals who cannot preserve the capital value to which their position once corresponded. This engenders a sense that the established order acknowledges them less than they acknowledge it. The individuals' attitudes and values are characterized by a conservatism aimed against modern life and a perceived poorer standard of living in respect of both economic standard of living and their own position's prestige or social standing.[7] This may be understood as a conservative strategy aimed at re-establishing a social order that acknowledged and rewarded them more. The fact that farmers, for example, are over-represented suggests that this might be the case.

The cultural aspect of the socio-cultural attitude dimension instead sets a more closed and nationalistic conservatism against a more open and cosmopolitan liberalism (cf. Lachat & Kriesi 2008:275). The low possession of cultural capital among cultur-

al conservatives combined with support of the Sweden Democrats and harsher punishment for crime indicates proximity to what previous research has designated authoritarianism.

As suggested regarding authoritarianism, cultural conservatism may be understood as a response to anomie (De Koster & Van der Waal 2007) and a sense of loss of meaning, a social agoraphobia (Houtman et al. 2008:123) in face of cultural diversification. A seemingly nostalgic identification with the national community, an attempt to protect the national culture (Kriesi et al. 2008b:8), is put in place to counter-balance this cultural insecurity and lack of perceived social order. Cultural conservatism can thus be understood as a way of attempting to reduce cultural insecurity.

Among those with the lowest possession of capital, and especially the lowest amount of cultural capital, cultural conservatives are largely made up of groups whom globalization has subjected to labor market competition with increased job insecurity as a result, in other words, the losers of globalization (cf. Kriesi et al. 2008b; Lachat & Dolezal 2008). In light of this, one explanation of cultural conservatism is that it involves an understanding of one's economic situation that departs from traditional socio-economic interpretations. The individual's personal precarious economic situation is understood as a consequence of a specific group; that is, as a consequence of immigration. Cultural conservatism can, in other words, be understood as a socio-cultural manifestation of defending a standard of living where the threat to the standard of living is thought to emanate from immigration. This may be expressed through emphasis of not only distributive justice, but "retributive justice, i.e., judgments about the justice of sanctioning those who deviate from group norms" (Houtman et al. 2008:102), a socio-cultural strategy aimed at a socio-economic situation.[8]

The low level of possession of cultural capital is also manifest in a low level of political skill (Enelo 2013:84-5). This becomes evident through a difference in the complexity of understanding that gives rise to political opinions. Culturally conservative attitudes may here be understood as based upon the immediacy of social conditions, upon their face value. Often, disadvantaged groups are seen as the problem instead of the underlying social structures

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[6] As Evans (1993) points out, the perception of what future opportunities may exist affect party selection.

[7] This idea is consistent with the fact that moral conservatives generally possess less economic capital than cultural conservatives, even though they are older and possess more capital in total.

[8] Something which may lead to the working class beginning to vote more often for rightist parties: "the more the welfare state is constructed in moral terms, the more working-class authoritarianism undermines support for the welfare state" (Houtman et al. 2008:105).

that might conceivably be the cause of prevailing social conditions (jfr Gabennesch 1972). The appeal lies not only in the contents of the explanation, but its simplicity (jfr Lipset 1959).

Both cultural and moral conservatism can thus be understood as carrying an element of nostalgia and a wish for a re-establishing of the social order. They differ in their understanding of the cause of the worsening of the social order, whether it is due to the worsening of morals or due to cultural diversification. They are, however, both susceptible to mobilization in the name of an ethnic and moral reformulation of a lost 'people's home.'

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Abstract

There is general consensus that the demand and the supply of political opinions may be understood as two-dimensional, with one attitude dimension stressing issues of economic equality and one revolving around questions of individual freedom. In this article I highlight a vagueness regarding how the second, socio-cultural, attitude dimension has been studied in prior research. I argue that the attitude dimension harbors two different aspects, one regarding moral questions and one regarding questions about culture, and discuss how these two aspects can be conceptualized as consisting of different world views.

Keywords

Political space, worldview, cultural conservatism, moral conservatism, political opinions

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Appendix

Table 1. Socio-cultural worldviews and party preference.

Party	N	In set (%)	Liberal (%)		Cultural conservative (%)		Moral conservative (%)	
			Left	Right	Left	Right	Left	Right
Left Party	97	5.2	20.2	0.9	4.3	0.8	4.5	0.0
Social Democratic Party	561	30.2	38.6	8.1	52.3	8.9	48.0	11.6
Center Party	147	7.9	5.5	15.7	5.4	5.9	7.6	9.0
Liberal Party	136	7.3	4.0	12.8	3.1	8.9	5.6	10.1
Moderate Party	410	22.0	1.8	40.0	10.1	55.7	4.0	31.7
Christian Democratic Party	127	6.8	0.7	4.7	3.1	4.6	7.6	27.5
Green Party	107	5.8	16.9	7.2	3.1	0.4	4.0	1.1
Sweden Democrats Party	34	1.8	0.0	0.4	3.9	2.5	2.5	3.2
	1619	87.0	87.9	89.8	85.3	87.8	83.8	94.2

Table 2. Socio-cultural worldviews and class fractions.

Class	N	In set (%)	Liberal (%)		Cultural conservative (%)		Moral conservative (%)	
			Left	Right	Left	Right	Left	Right
Upper middle	247	14.0	23.5	27.9	4.8	11.4	7.5	18.6
Cultural	117	6.6	17.3	9.3	2.0	2.7	4.3	9.3
Balanced	79	4.5	3.8	12.8	1.2	3.6	2.7	3.8
Economic	51	2.9	2.3	5.8	1.6	5.0	0.5	5.5
Middle	765	43.3	46.9	51.3	31.6	47.7	32.6	49.2
Cultural	329	18.6	31.2	20.4	10.8	11.4	13.4	17.5
Balanced	105	5.9	5.4	9.7	5.6	5.0	3.7	4.4
Economic	331	18.8	10.4	21.2	15.2	31.4	15.5	27.3
Workers	753	42.7	29.6	20.8	63.6	40.9	59.9	32.2
	1861	100	100	100	100	100	100	100