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Does Ideology Trump Party Loyalty

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Does Ideology Trump Party Loyalty?

**Summary:** Ideology is an important factor in vote choice, but it does not trump party loyalty and in some cases may even magnify it.

**Background:**
- Party affiliation and political ideology are typically paired together.
- It's consequently difficult to disentangle their individual impact on vote choice.
- Utah's 2016 election presented a rare exception to this trend.
- Non-conservative Republican nominee (Donald Trump) and conservative independent candidate (Evan McMullin)

**Research Questions:**
- Do voters prioritize party loyalty or personal ideology when casting a ballot?
- What are other predictors of party defection?

**Data:**
- Survey responses from 2016 Utah Colleges Exit Poll

**Methods:**
- Multinomial logit regression
- IV: presidential ballot choice
- DV: ideology and party identification
- Control variables: age, gender, education

**Results:**
- Moderate Republicans were most likely to defect; strong conservatives were more loyal.
- Party identification strength had a greater effect than did ideology.
- McMullin's LDS background helped him mostly among active LDS Republicans.
- Ideology and party I.D. remain highly correlated.

**Implications:**
- More conservative ideology is positively associated with defection to McMullin, except for "strongly conservative Republicans".
- This could be a result of respondents conflating the two terms or strategic voting.
- Further research could develop ideological preference index for respondents using issue questions—this could fix self-reporting biases.