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Does Ideology Trump Party Loyalty

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Does Ideology Trump Party Loyalty?

Soren Schmidt, Political Science | Faculty mentor: Prof. Michael Barber | Funded by ORCA grant

**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