

**Stony Brook University  
The Graduate School**

Doctoral Defense Announcement

**Abstract**

Principled Conservatives or Covert Racists:  
Disentangling Racism and Ideology through Implicit Measures

By

**Inna Burdein**

This dissertation addresses the current debate in the race literature regarding the connection between racism and conservatism. Specifically, do conservatives support or oppose certain racial policies because of the principles they hold, or because they want to insure a negative outcome for minorities? Due to the obvious social desirability concerns when explicitly studying this topic, I utilize both implicit measures and experimentation to get at thoughts and practices of conservatives, rather than their rhetoric. In turn, I find that despite the fact that conservatives discuss policies in ideological terms, at the implicit level these policies activate racial, and not, ideological considerations. Furthermore, I find that the ideological concepts of work ethic and individualism are quite linked to racial concepts (i.e. negative stereotypes) in the minds of conservatives, particularly sophisticated conservatives. Finally, an experiment that puts conservative principles to the test, uncovers that principles are *not* consistent across people, but are applied differentially based on the race of the beneficiary as well as the sophistication of the respondent. In line with Social Dominance theory, sophisticated conservatives apply their principles to minorities but not whites, while the non-sophisticates apply these same principles to whites – further legitimizing the myth that principles, rather than race, define policy.

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