



# Compensatory control, system justification and political behavior

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# Basic terminology



## Exemples of political behavior

- Vote
- Participation in social manifestations, support of political partys, etc.
  - Meeting against gay marrige vs. gay pride...
- All proximal causes of futur political behavior
  - Attitudes, ideology...



# Overview

- **Importance of personal control**
- **Compensatory control phenomena**
  - Cognitive transformation of reality
  - Support of external systems of control
    - Belief in God
    - Government Defense



# The Importance of Personal Control



## Personal control and psychological well-being

- Feeling that one has personal control is associated with positive psychological outcomes, including better mental health and more effective coping with stressors (Baltes & Baltes, 1986; Bandura, 1989)





# The Importance of Personal Control



## Why we need to feel in control?

- Personal control shield individuals from the threat associated with perceptions of a random, arbitrary, social world
- Because believing the world is random place provokes anxiety





# Phenomena of Compensatory Control



## What happens when we lack control?

- Despite this need to see the world as nonrandom, life circumstances and situational constraints can lead to dramatic fluctuations in perceptions of personal control.
  - People are frequently faced with events that threaten the social order, such as terrorist attacks, wars, and economic crises.
- In such circumstances humans use an arsenal of compensatory psychological and perceptual systems designed to preserve a sense of order and nonrandomness





# Compensatory Control in Our Minds



## Whitson & Galinsky (2008)

- Lack of control and pattern perception
  - Whitson, J.A., & Galinsky, A.D. (2008). Lacking control increases illusory pattern perception. *Science*, 322, 115–117.





# Compensatory Control in Our Minds



## Whitson & Galinsky (2008)

- Children of lower economic status overestimate the size of coins as compared with the wealthy (Bruner & Goodman, 1947)
- Hungry individuals are more likely to see food in ambiguous images (Levine, Chein, & Murphy, 1942)
- Ones' need to see world as nonrandom place should induce corresponding transformations on the perceptive level.







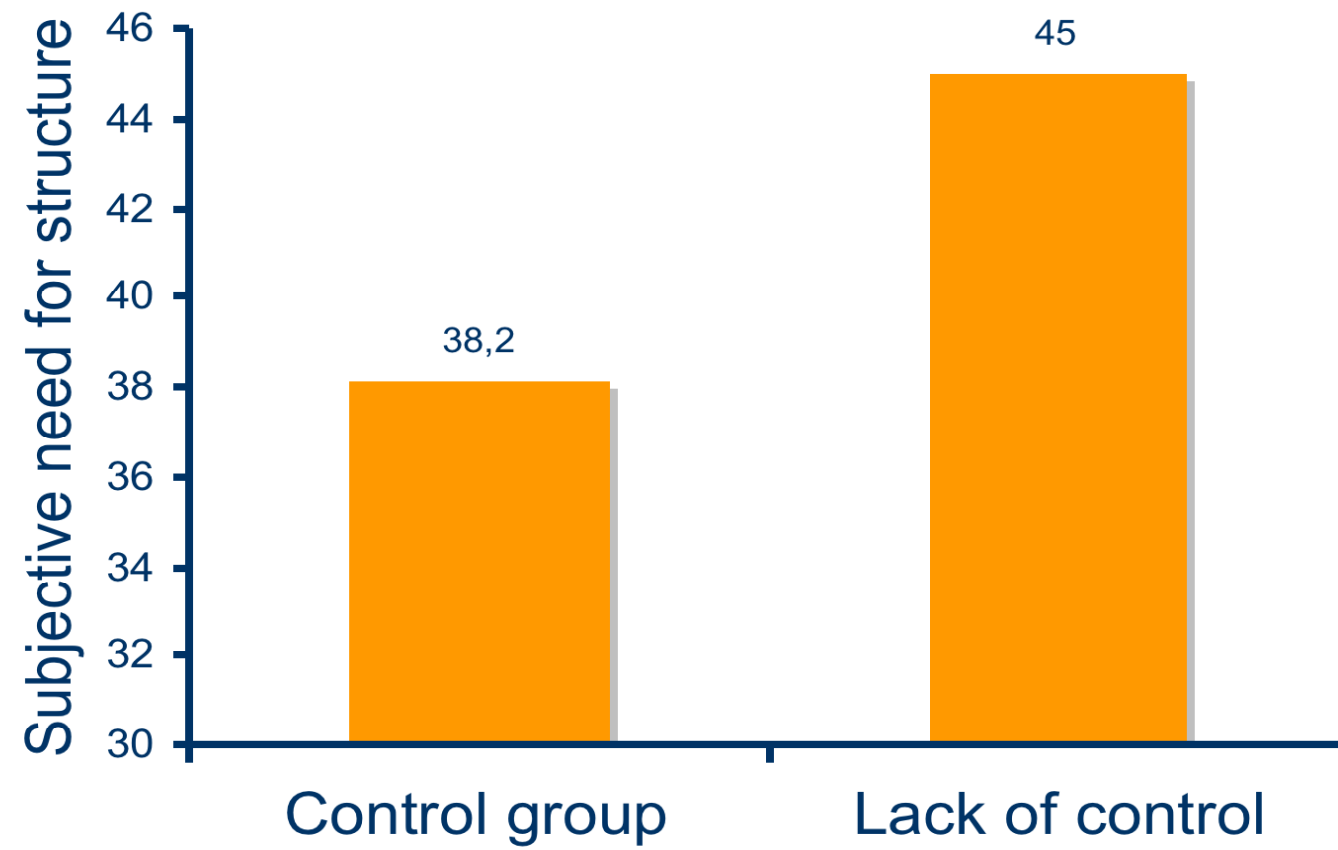
# Compensatory Control in Our Minds



## Whitson & Galinsky (2008, Study 1)

- Manipulation of lack of control (Concept identification task)
  - Participants in the lack-of-control condition received random performance feedback that was not contingent on their responses.
  - Control group did the same task without performance feedback
- Both groups completed *Personal Need for Structure Scale*
  - Assesses the need to “structure the world into a simplified, more manageable form”.
    - ...It upsets me to go into a situation without knowing what I can expect from it.







# Compensatory Control in Our Minds



## Whitson & Galinsky (2008, Study 2)

- Manipulation of lack of control
  - Same as in Study 1
- Measure of visual pattern perception with a modified version of the snowy pictures task
  - Participants had to identify whether there was an image or not and, if so, what it was.
    - 12 Items on which the image exists
    - 12 items without image





1. \_\_\_\_\_



2. \_\_\_\_\_



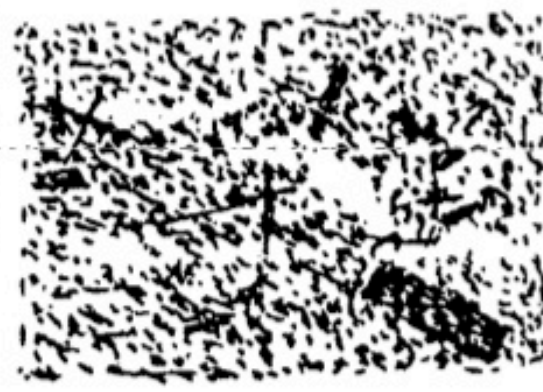
3. \_\_\_\_\_



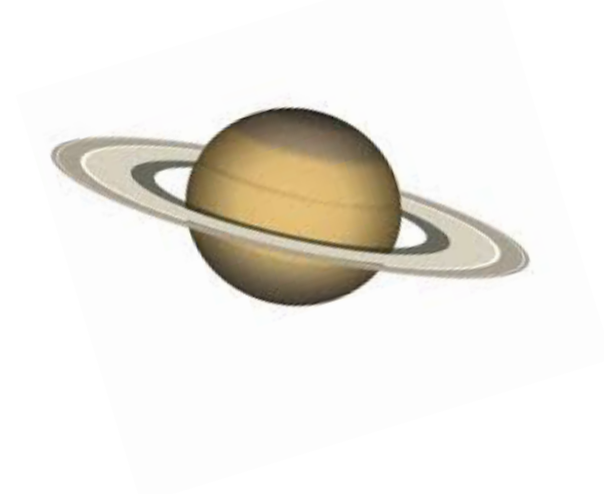
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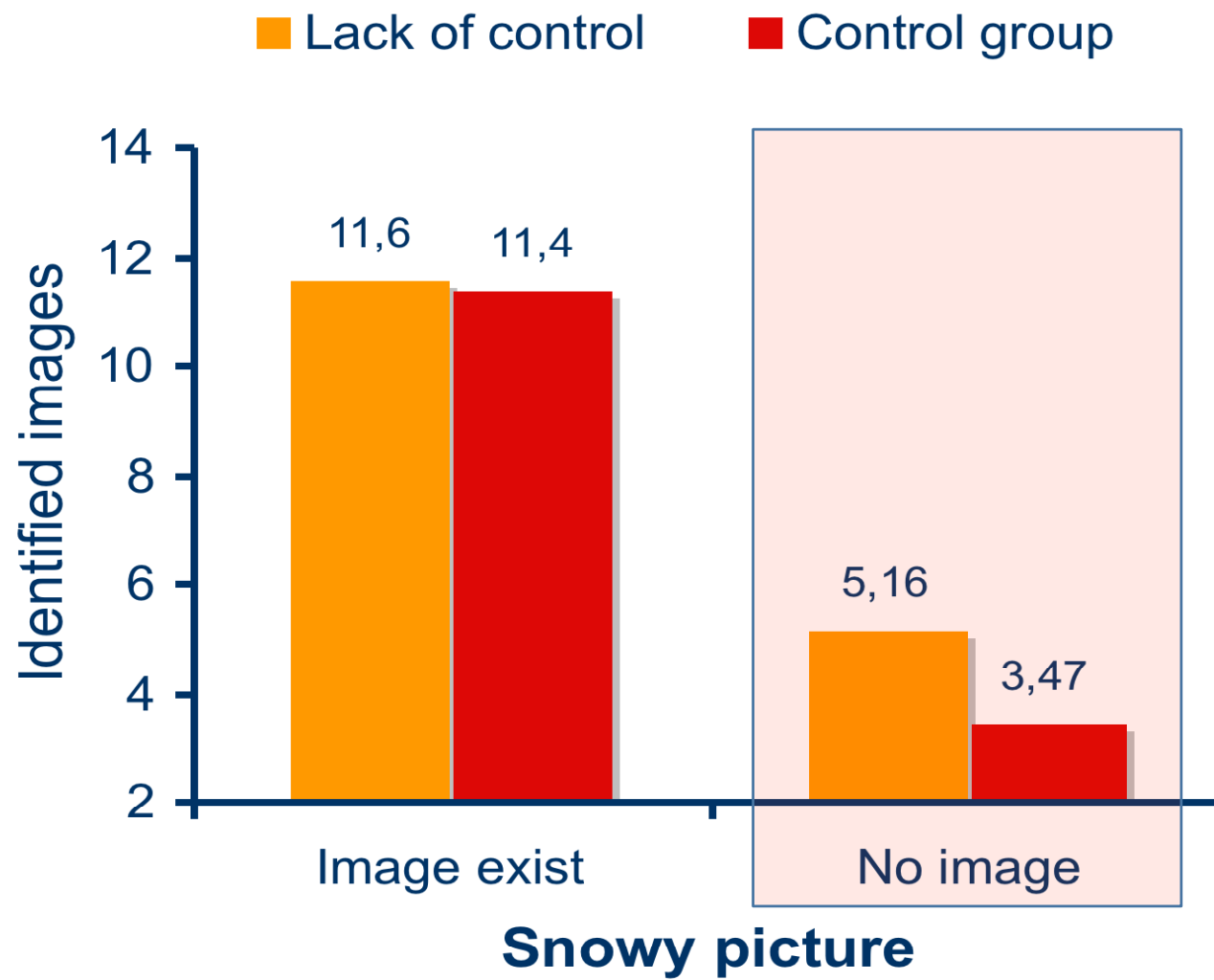


5. \_\_\_\_\_



6. \_\_\_\_\_







# Compensatory Control in Our Minds



## Whitson & Galinsky (2008)

- Experiencing a loss of control lead people to desire more structure (Study 1) and to perceive illusory patterns (Study 2).
- The need to be and feel in control is so strong that individuals will produce a pattern from noise to return the world to a predictable state.











# Compensatory Control in Our Minds



## Whitson & Galinsky (2008, Study 3)

- People who temporarily lost control try to establish (causal) relation between completely independent events







# Compensatory Control in Our Minds



## Jovanovic & Drace (in preparation)

- Measure of personal control
  - Some people feel they have control over their lives, while other people feel that what they do has no real effect on what happens to them”; how much control you feel on a scale ranging from 1 (*none at all*) to 10 (*a great deal*)
- Single item measure of belief in conspiracy theories
  - Some political and social events are debated (for example 09/11 attacks, the death of Lady Diana, the assassination of John F. Kennedy). It is suggested that the “official version” of these events could be an attempt to hide the truth to the public. This “official version” could mask the fact that these events have been planned and secretly prepared by a covert alliance of powerful individuals or organizations (for example secret services or government). What do you think?





# Compensatory Control in Our Minds



## Jovanovic & Drace (in preparation)

- People who lack control have a greater inclination to conspiracy beliefs.
- Conspiracy beliefs are mental sense-making processes aimed at seeing the world as orderly, understandable, and predictable.





# Phenomena of Compensatory Control



## Other compensatory systems

- People can cope with the existential threat coming from having low levels of perceived control by endorsing external systems that impose structure and order in their social world.
- The main compensatory external systems are believing in a controlling God and in the government.



# Compensatory Control in the Heavens: Belief in God

## Correlational evidence

- Marginalized social groups tend to more strongly believe in religious doctrine (Argyle & Beit-Hallami, 1975; Gurin, Veroff, & Feld, 1960; Pargament, 1997).
- Low SES groups pray more (Baker 2008) and believe more in the existence of God's control (Schieman, 2010) than high SES groups.

# Compensatory Control in the Heavens: Belief in God

## Kay, Gaucher, Napier, Callan, & Laurin (2008, Study 1)

- Loss of control and belief in religious source of control?

Kay, A.C. et al. (2008). God and the government: Testing a compensatory control mechanism for the support of external systems. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95, 18–35.





# Compensatory Control in the Heavens: Belief in God



## Kay, Gaucher, Napier, Callan, & Laurin (2008, Study 1)

- Manipulation of lack of control
  - Recall of positive event over which individuals did (or did not) have control
    - Think of something positive that happened to you in the past few months that was [not] your fault (i.e., that you had [absolutely no] control over).







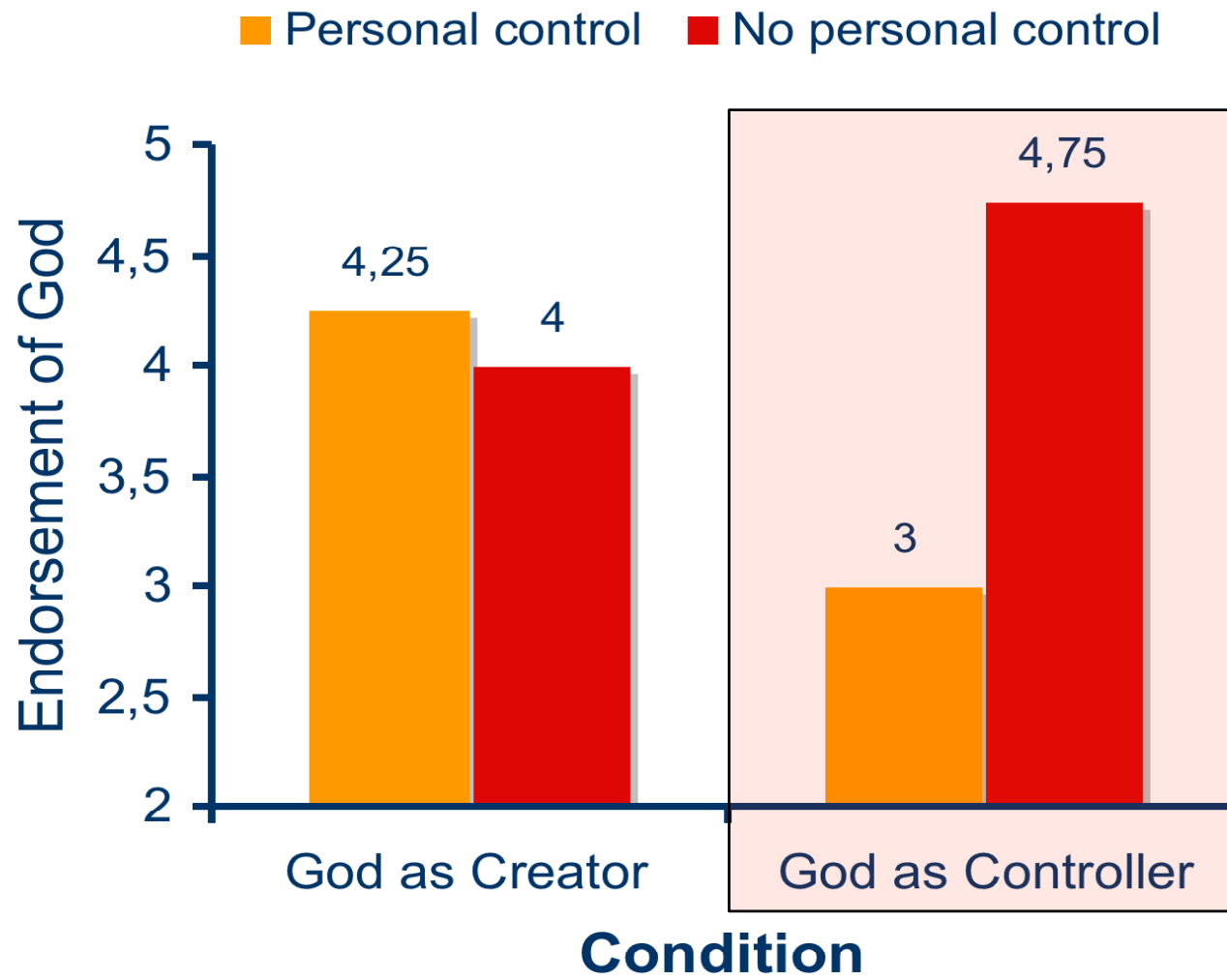
# Compensatory Control in the Heavens: Belief in God



## Kay, Gaucher, Napier, Callan, & Laurin (2008, Study 1)

- Measures of belief in God
  - God as a creator
    - “To what extent do you think it is feasible that God, or some type of nonhuman entity, created the universe?”
  - God as a controller
    - To what extent do you think it is feasible that God, or some type of nonhuman entity, is in control, at least in part, of the events within our universe?





# Compensatory Control in the Heavens: Belief in God

## Kay, Gaucher, Napier, Callan, & Laurin (2008, Study 1)

- Lowering perceived control increases belief specifically in an interventionist or controlling God
- Why people in BiH and Serbia are so religious?
  - Normative conformity
  - Compensatory control strategy



# Compensatory Control in the Heavens: Belief in God



## Drace, Efendic & Hadziahmetovic (2015)

- Religiosity and attitudes towards out-groups
  - Drace, S., Efendic, E., Hadziahmetovic, N. (2015). The relation among intrinsic religiosity, religious fundamentalism and attitudes towards out-groups in Muslims from Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Primenjena psihologija*. 8(4), 379-394.



# Compensatory Control in the Heavens: Belief in God

## Drace, Efendic & Hadziahmetovic (2015)

- Religiosity correlated negatively with attitudes toward value-violating groups (e.g., atheists, homosexuals).
- Similar results were observed for the ethnic out-groups, where higher levels of religiosity correlated with higher levels of affective distance toward Serbs and Croats.





# Phenomena of Compensatory Control



## Compensatory control in our Institutions

- People routinely defend and legitimize their sociopolitical systems (e.g., their governments; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004).
- System justification is so robust because these systems can serve as compensatory sources of control, leading people to place increasing faith in the structure offered by sociopolitical institutions when personal control is threatened.



# Compensatory Control in Our Institutions: Government Defense

## Kay, Gaucher, Napier, Callan, & Laurin (2008, Study 3)

- World Values Survey (1994 to 2003) on the sample representative of 85% of the world's population.
- Measure of personal control
  - Some people feel they have control over their lives, while other people feel that what they do has no real effect on what happens to them"; how much control you feel on a scale ranging from 1 (*none at all*) to 10 (*a great deal*)
- Other measures
  - Age, gender, political orientation (liberals vs. democrats), itd



# Compensatory Control in Our Institutions: Government Defense

## Kay, Gaucher, Napier, Callan, & Laurin (2008, Study 3)

- Support for governmental control
  - Bipolar scale ranging from 1 = *People should take more responsibility to provide for themselves* to 10 = *The government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for*
- Perceived benevolence
  - The Corruption Perceptions Index ranging from 1 (*most corrupt*) to 10 (*least corrupt*)



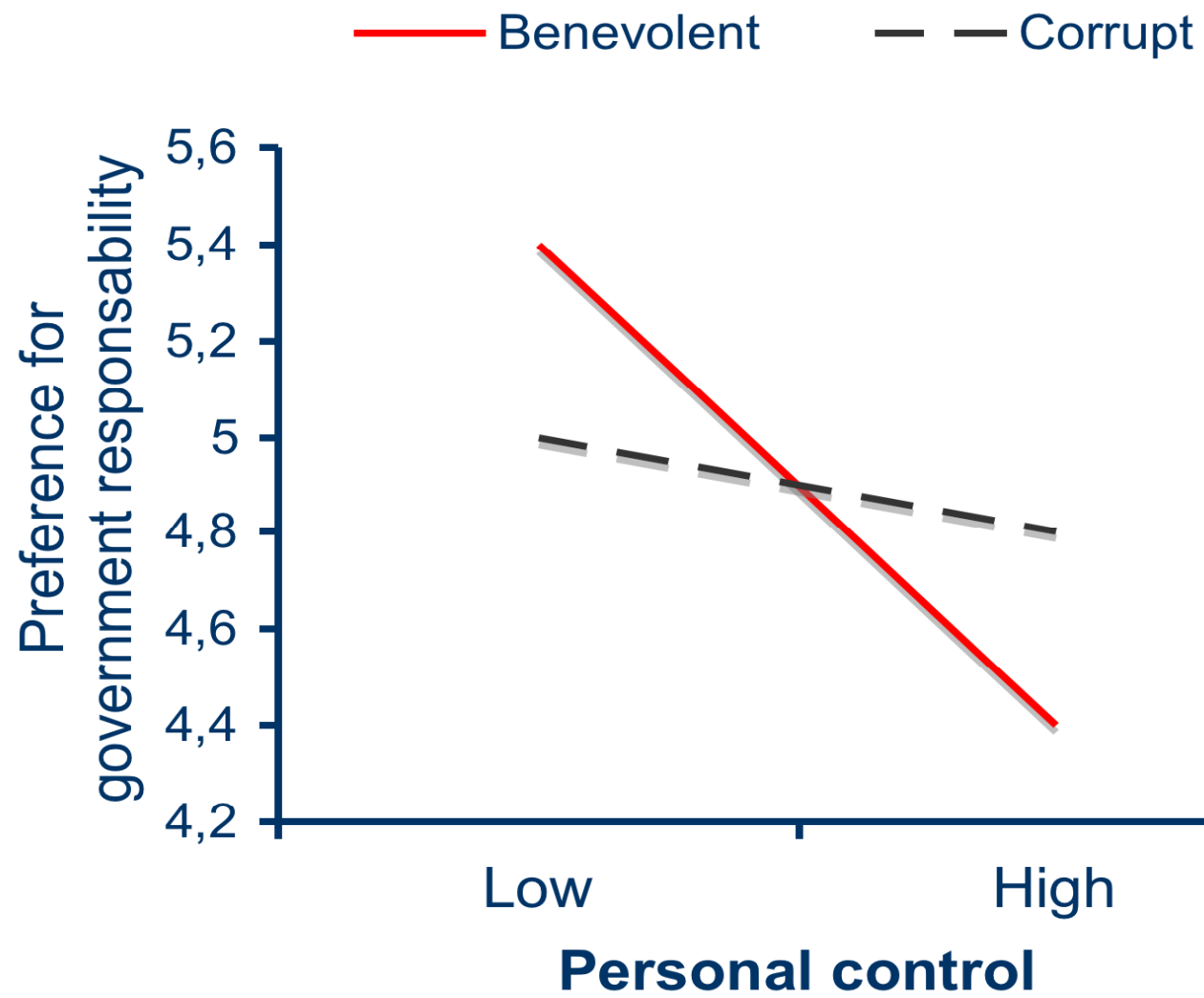


# Compensatory Control in Our Institutions: Government Defense

**Kay, Gaucher, Napier, Callan, & Laurin (2008, Study 3)**

- Negative correlation between personal control and support for governmental control
- Role of perceived benevolence?





# Compensatory Control in Our Institutions: Government Defense

## Kay, Gaucher, Napier, Callan, & Laurin (2008, Study 3)

- Need for personal control is associated with increased support for external systems of control, other than God.
- Moderating role of benevolence
  - For those living in countries in which the government is perceived as benevolent, the relationship between personal control and preference for governmental responsibility was stronger than for those living in countries in which the government is perceived as corrupt.



# Compensatory Control in Our Institutions: Government Defense

**Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski & Sulloway (2003)**

- Role of conservatism?
  - Jost, J. T. et al. (2003). Political conservatism as motivated social cognition. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 339–375.



# Compensatory Control in Our Institutions: Government Defense

Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski & Sulloway (2003)

Measures	Konservatism
Need for order, structure, closure	0.26
Intolerance of ambiguity	0.34*
Openness	- 0.32



# Compensatory Control in Our Institutions: Government Defense

## Nail & McGregor (2009)

- Shift in ideological beliefs after 09/11/2001
  - Nail, P. R., & McGregor, I. (2009). Conservative Shift among Liberals and Conservatives Following 9/11/01. *Social Justice Research*, 22, 231-240.

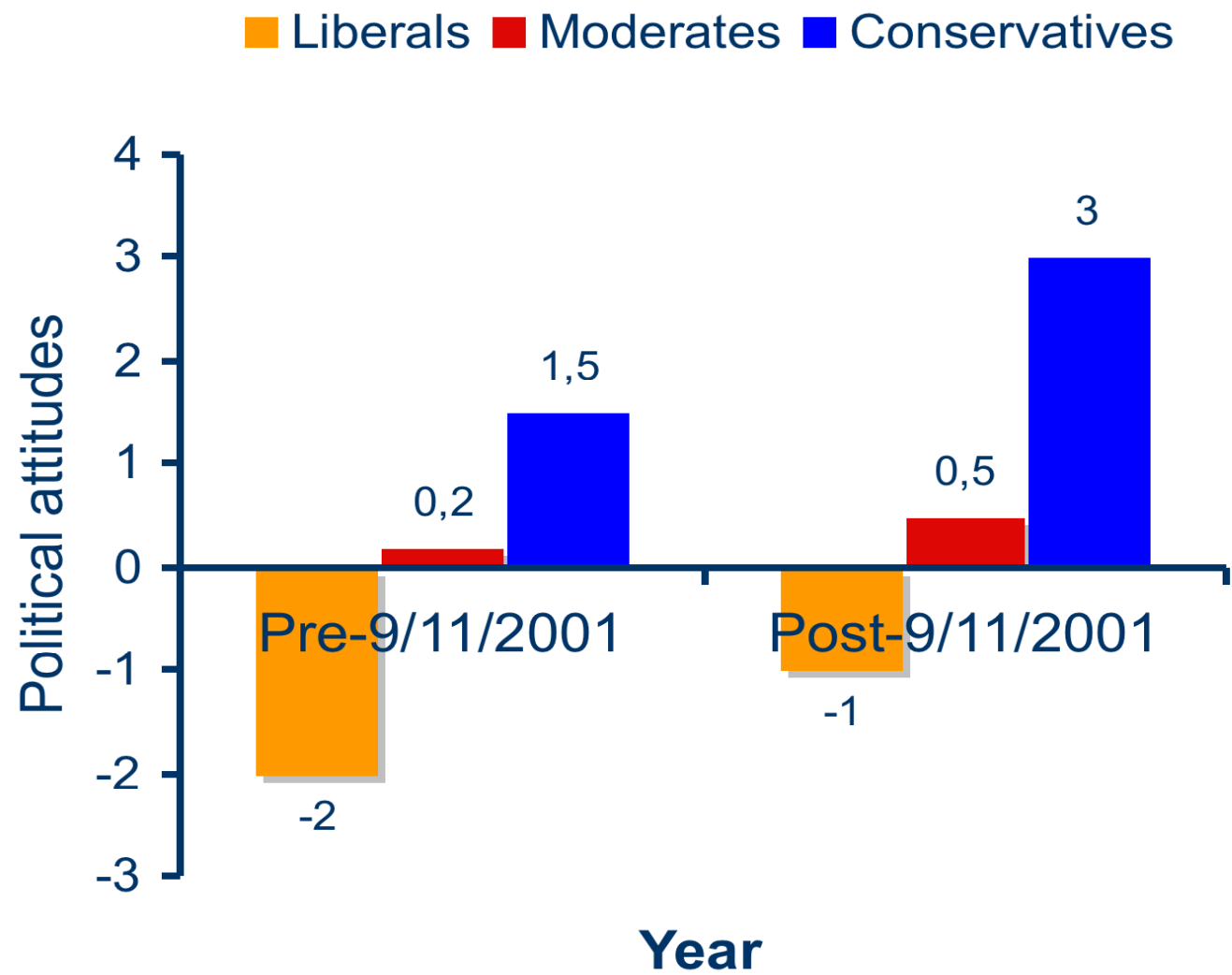


# Compensatory Control in Our Institutions: Government Defense

## Nail & McGregor (2009)

- Two independent samples of adult, non-college students
  - The first sample was taken in October and November of 2000, the second during the same months in 2001.
- Political orientation
  - Single item scale ranging from 1 (*very liberal*) to 5 (*very conservative*)
- Political attitudes
  - Eight items : The American Civil Liberties Union, Liberals, Republicans, George W. Bush, Socialized Medicine, Conservatives, Feminists, and Increasing Military Spending







# Compensatory Control in Our Institutions: Government Defense

## Nail & McGregor (2009)

- Political attitudes became significantly more conservative following 9/11/01
- Further, this conservative shift in political attitudes was comparable for self-identified liberals, moderates, and conservatives alike
- Defensive conservatism as response to the threatening situations

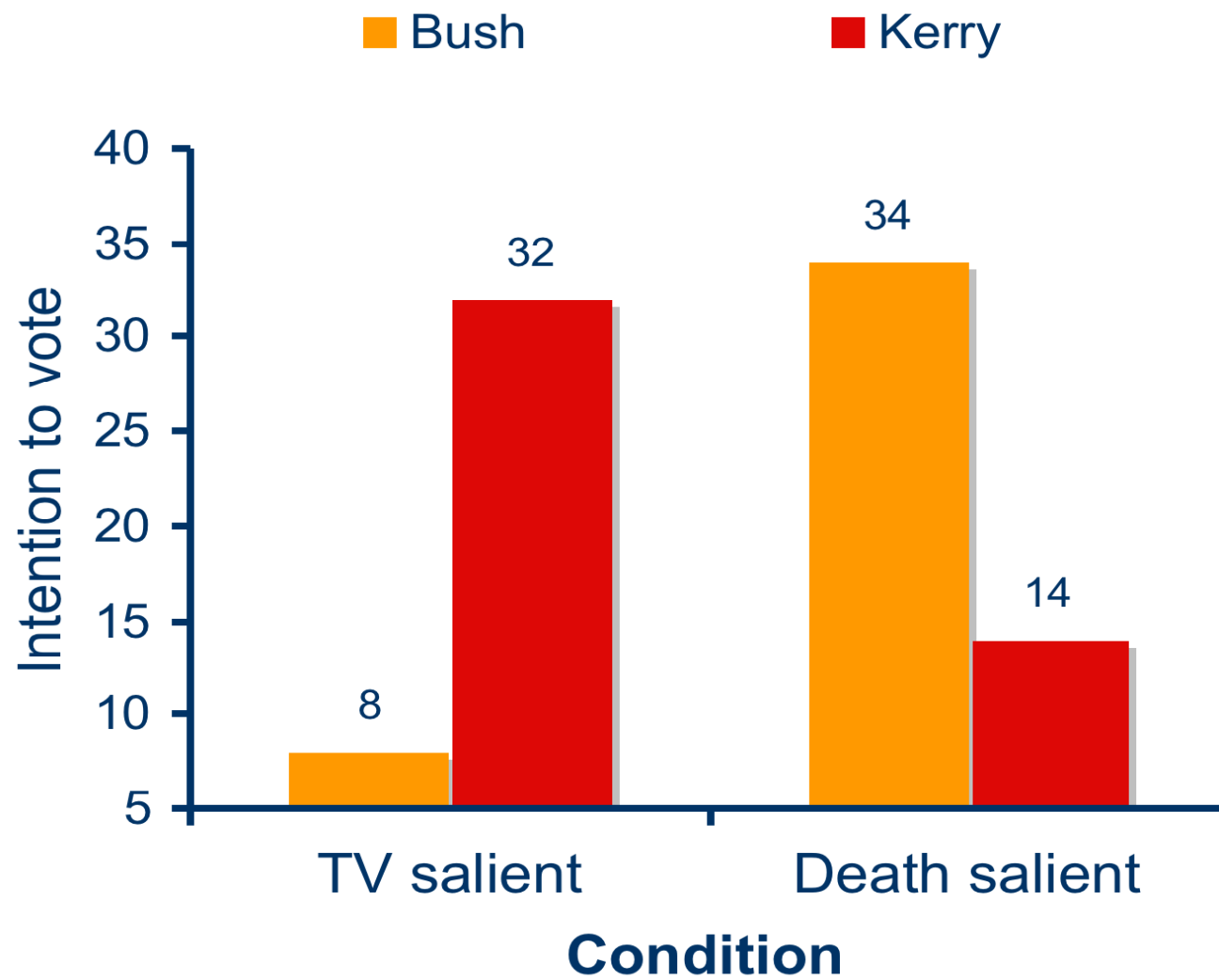


# Compensatory Control in Our Institutions: Government Defense

## Cohen et al. (2005)

- Threat and vote intention?
  - Cohen, F., Ogilvie, D. M., Solomon, S., Greenberg, J., & Pyszczynski, T. (2005). American roulette: The effect of reminders of death on support for George W. Bush in the 2004 presidential election. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 5, 177–87.





# Compensatory Control in Our Institutions: Government Defense

## Mirisola et al. (2014)

- Societal threat to safety, compensatory control, and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA)
- Mirisola, A., Roccato, M., Russo, S., Spagna, G., & Vieno, A. (2014). Societal threat to safety, compensatory control, and right-wing authoritarianism. *Political Psychology*, 35(6), Dec, 2014 pp. 795-812.



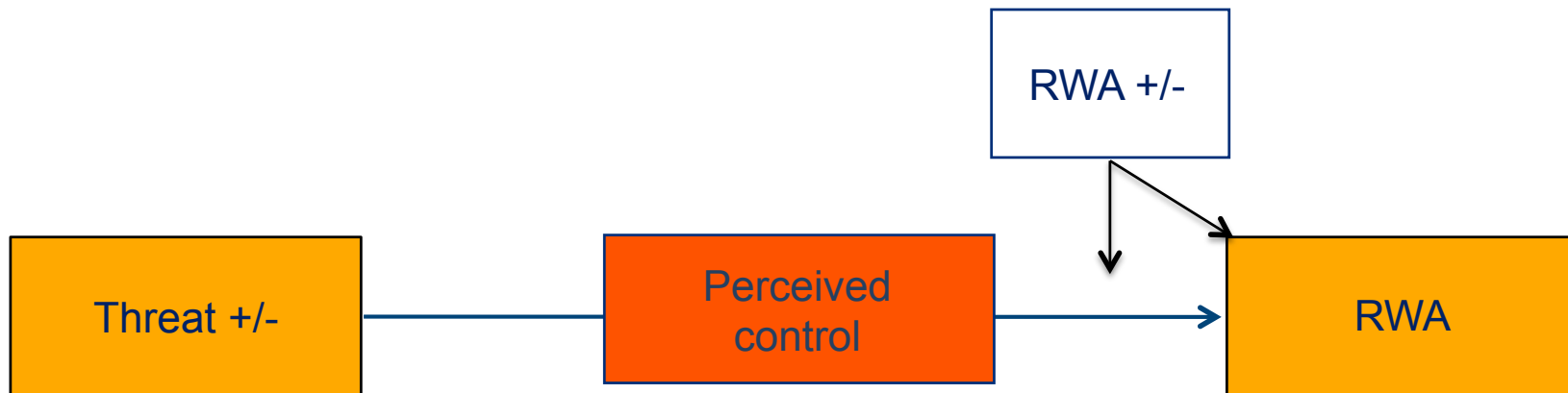
# Compensatory Control in Our Institutions: Government Defense

Mirisola et al. (2014)

- Manipulation of threat
  - Italy in 2020 was presented as one of the most secure nations in the world and the Italians as believing they live in one of the best periods of the human history.
  - Italy in 2020 was presented as a very dangerous place, in which home burglaries are a common experience, and people avoid walking alone at night because armed squads control many city districts and regularly engage in assault and robbery
- Measures
  - RWA T1 & T2 (before and after manipulation of threat)
  - Perceived control  $T2 - T1$  (after – before manipulation of threat)



## Moderated mediation analysis



# Compensatory Control in Our Institutions: Government Defense

## Mirisola et al. (2014)

- Being exposed to the threatening vs. the secure scenario predicted a reduction of perceived control, which, in turn, significantly influenced RWA at T2 (but only for those with low RWA)
- RWA could be considered as a resource people may efficiently use to cope with threat and stress.
- People submit to societal authorities in order to compensate for a severe loss of personal control over their social world



# Compensatory Control in Our Institutions: Government Defense

Jovanovic & Drace (in preparation)

- Measures
  - Na vlast u BiH bi trebao doci neko ko ce zavesti strogi red i disciplinu .31
  - Mislim da bi nasoj zemlji trebao jedan diktator .28
  - Ne bi mi smetalo da neka vanjska sila preuzme kontrolu u nasoj zemlji .33





# Compensatory Control in Our Institutions: Government Defense

## Praktical implications

- Should we expect any political change in Balkans (Bosnia / Serbia)?
  - Econimical chrisis
  - Threat
  - Absence of political alternative

