



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Personality and Individual Differences

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/paid



Short Communication

Personality and politics ☆

Peter K. Jonason

School of Social Sciences and Psychology, University of Western Sydney, Milperra, NSW 2214, Australia



ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 14 July 2014

Received in revised form 1 August 2014

Accepted 2 August 2014

Available online 3 September 2014

Keywords:

Politics

Big Five

HEXACO

Dark Triad

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between personality traits and political attitudes in a study of college-students ($N = 1389$) and an MTurk sample ($N = 281$) from America. The association between openness and political liberalism was replicated using two different measures of openness. Narcissism, extraversion, psychopathy, conscientiousness, and honesty were associated with political conservatism. Machiavellianism was associated with low rates of political liberalism. This study has the potential to inform the conversation about the utility of personality traits to understand political attitudes.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The examination and exploration of how personality traits relate to the political attitudes is a matter of debate. For some (Baker, 2005; Bishop, 2005) personality cannot predict political attitudes because political attitudes are unstable. For others (Carney, Jost, Gosling, & Potter, 2008; Jost, West, & Gosling, 2009) political attitudes are themselves personality traits and, therefore, worthy of study in relation to taxonomies of personality. This study is designed to replicate and extend the former position in two important ways. First, most of what we know about the relationship between personality traits and political attitudes is confined to the Big Five (i.e., Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism). However, the HEXACO model (i.e., the Big Five plus an Honesty/Humility dimension) might also be informative. Second, the Big Five are a rather socially desirable description of personality. Therefore, this study also extends what is known about the relationship between political attitudes and personality by examining its associations with the Dark Triad traits.

If political attitudes are stable one would expect there to be similar patterns in relation to personality traits within and between studies. Therefore, one important task here is to attempt to replicate prior findings with the Big Five traits and to show how those traits are not subject to methodological or sampling artefacts (Carney et al., 2008; Jost et al., 2009). Those who are more open to

experience and intellectual in nature may be more politically liberal. Conversely, individuals who are conscientious may have a more methodical and cautious approach to change. This should translate into conscientiousness being correlated with political conservatism. These relationships should be robust across different measures of the trait (i.e., the Big Five and the HEXACO).

In addition, it is worth expanding what is known about the links between politics and personality to examine some “darker” aspects of human nature. One advantage of the HEXACO over the traditional Big Five is that it incorporates at least one ostensible “dark” aspect of human nature by assessing individual differences in dishonesty (Ashton & Lee, 2007). Alternatively, three aspects of “darker” personality that have garnered significant interest lately (Jonason, Webster, Schmitt, Li, & Crysel, 2012) and are related to dishonesty (Jonason & McCain, 2012), that is the Dark Triad traits. The Dark Triad traits (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) are characterized by entitlement, superiority, dominance (i.e., narcissism), glib social charm, manipulateness (i.e., Machiavellianism), and callous social attitudes, impulsivity, and interpersonal antagonism (i.e., psychopathy). Prior research has reliably highlighted the “dark” side of these traits including limited empathy (Jonason, Lyons, Bethell, & Ross, 2013c), social dominance (Jones, 2013), heightened violence (Jones & Paulhus, 2010), and racism (Hodson, Hogg, & MacInnis, 2009; Jones, 2013). Political conservatives tend to adopt a “colder” and less sensitive approach to deal with others in as much as they are opposed to social welfare and other ventures to help the needy. Antisocial personality traits might be part of the correlates that enable this kind of political disposition.

This study replicates and extends what is known about the relationship between personality and political attitudes. It examines how the Big Five, the HEXACO, and the Dark Triad traits predict

☆ The author thanks Samuel Gosling for access to the data for Study 1. Study 2 was funded by a seed grant from the University of Western Sydney to the first author.

E-mail address: p.jonason@uws.edu.au

political attitudes. Given that the Big Five are correlated with the Dark Triad traits (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), and the HEXACO and the Dark Triad traits are also correlated (Jonason & McCain, 2012) and each personality taxonomy is not fully orthogonal within itself, it is essential to control for the shared variance among and between the traits. This study, therefore, simply reports results from two multiple regressions. This will allow for better precision in understanding the links between politics and personality.

2. Study 1

This study assesses the relationship between personality traits and self-reported liberalism-conservatism in a large cohort of university undergraduates. In this study what is known about the correlations between the Big Five traits and political attitudes is replicated. This study also extends what is known about the relationship between personality and political attitudes by incorporating the Dark Triad traits as well.

2.1. Method

2.1.1. Participants and procedure

One thousand three hundred eighty-nine undergraduates (33% male), aged 18–50 years old ($M = 18.88$, $SD = 2.15$) from the University of Texas at Austin participated in an online study in their introductory psychology course. The majority (46%) of the sample was of European descent, with 6% of African descent, 23% of Hispanic/Latino descent, 14% of Asian descent, and the remainder reporting some “other” ethnic identity. Upon completion participants were thanked and debriefed.

2.1.2. Measures

To measure the Dark Triad traits, the Dark Triad Dirty Dozen (Jonason & Webster, 2010) was used. Participants were asked how much they agreed (1 = *disagree strongly*; 5 = *agree strongly*) with statements such as: “I tend to want others to admire me” (i.e., narcissism), “I tend to lack remorse” (i.e., psychopathy), and “I have used deceit or lied to get my way” (i.e., Machiavellianism). Items were averaged together to create an index of narcissism (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .74$), Machiavellianism ($\alpha = .70$), and psychopathy ($\alpha = .71$).¹

The Big Five Inventory (Benet-Martínez & John, 1998) was used to assess the Big Five traits. Participants were asked their agreement with 44 items (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*). Five factors were created by averaging the respective items for Extraversion ($\alpha = .88$), Neuroticism ($\alpha = .82$), Openness ($\alpha = .80$), Conscientiousness ($\alpha = .81$), and Agreeableness ($\alpha = .79$).

Political orientation was measured by asking people to self-identify (Jost et al., 2009). Four percent rated themselves as “extremely conservative”, 20% as “somewhat conservative”, 33% as “in the middle”, 28% as “somewhat liberal”, and 7% as “extremely liberal”, suggesting a rather normal distribution of self-identified political orientation where low scores are associated with extreme conservatism and high scores are associated with extreme liberalism. In total, we had a slightly left-leaning sample ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.97$; Range 1–5).

2.2. Results

Table 1 contains a summary of the results from a multiple regression that controls for the shared variance within the Big Five

Table 1

Multiple regression examining the associations between personality and political attitudes (Study 1).

	β	t
Extraversion	-.10	-3.16**
Agreeableness	-.03	-0.69
Conscientiousness	-.11	-3.35**
Neuroticism	.03	0.93
Openness	.22	7.63**
Machiavellianism	.01	0.36
Psychopathy	.08	2.07*
Narcissism	-.09	-2.73**

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

and the Dark Triad traits and between each personality typology. Political liberalism was correlated with extraversion, conscientiousness, and narcissism. Political conservatism was linked to lacking openness and psychopathy.

3. Study 2

Study 1 was limited in a number of ways. First, it relied on a contentious measure of the Dark Triad. Second, it relied solely on the Big Five model of personality when the HEXACO model might provide additional precision. Third, it was conducted using college students only who may not be all that particularly politically active. Fourth, it assumes that political attitudes are best characterized in a bipolar as opposed to two-dimensional way. Therefore, in order to address these, Study 2 was conducted.

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Participants and procedure

The sample was composed of 281 American participants (36% male), aged 17–76 years old ($M = 32.26$, $SD = 11.70$), who were paid US\$1 for their completion of a series of measures on MTurk. Five percent self-identified as African American, 80% as European American, 9% as Asian American, and the remainder (6%) reported belonging to an “other” ethnic group. Upon completion participants were thanked and debriefed.

3.1.2. Measures

The Short-Dark Triad (Jones & Paulhus, 2014) is a concise measure of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. It contains 27 items asking participants to rate their agreement (1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*) with statements reflecting narcissism (e.g., “I have been compared to famous people.”), Machiavellianism (e.g., “Most people can be manipulated.”), and psychopathy (e.g., “I like to get revenge on authorities.”). Items were summed to create indexes of Machiavellianism (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .81$), narcissism ($\alpha = .80$), and psychopathy ($\alpha = .82$).²

Individual differences in personality were assessed by the 60-item HEXACO-PI-R (Ashton & Lee, 2009).³ Participants were asked their agreement (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*) with the statements. For instance, as an indicator of the Honesty/Humility factor, participants were asked to what extent they agreed with the item: “I’d be tempted to use counterfeit money if I were sure I could get away with it”. The corresponding items were averaged to

² Machiavellianism correlated with both psychopathy ($r(279) = .58$, $p < .01$) and narcissism ($r(279) = .30$, $p < .01$), and narcissism correlated with psychopathy ($r(279) = .40$, $p < .01$).

³ Although it uses only 10 questions per subscale, it shows an almost identical factor structure to the full HEXACO scale with equivalent psychometric properties (Ashton & Lee, 2009).

¹ Machiavellianism correlated with psychopathy ($r(1215) = .38$, $p < .01$) and narcissism ($r(1210) = .39$, $p < .01$), and narcissism correlated with psychopathy ($r(1211) = .13$, $p < .01$).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/890389>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/890389>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)