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## Short Communication

# Openness to Experience, Honesty–Humility and ideological attitudes: A fine-grained analysis

Marta Desimoni\*, Luigi Leone

Department of Psychology of Social and Developmental Processes, “Sapienza” University of Rome, Italy



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## ABSTRACT

We aimed at replicating and extending recent findings about the relationships between the specific aspects entailed by Honesty–Humility and Openness to Experience and ideological attitudes. Study 1 ( $N = 820$ ) indicated that Openness–Curiosity, not Openness–Culture, was uniquely associated with Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) and that Humility, not Honesty, was uniquely related to Social Dominance Orientation. Divergent effects on RWA were identified for Honesty (positive) and Humility (negative). Study 2 ( $N = 586$ ) replicated further these results and investigated the moderating role of interest in politics, and the mediating role of Need for Closure in shaping the pattern of associations. Openness–Curiosity and Humility were related to ideological attitudes mostly in a direct way, and these associations were strengthened by interest in politics.

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## 1. Introduction

Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA; [Altemeyer, 1996](#)) is defined as strict adherence to conventional norms and values, uncritical subjection to authority, and hostility towards norm violators, whereas Social Dominance Orientation (SDO; [Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994](#)) refers to a preference for hierarchical rather than egalitarian relations between social groups. Research has emphasized the correlation of low Openness to Experience and RWA (e.g., [Sibley & Duckitt, 2014](#)), and the association of SDO with low Honesty–Humility ([Leone, Chirumbolo, & Desimoni, 2012](#)) – a factor featuring in the HEXACO framework (e.g., [Lee & Ashton, 2004](#)). More contrasting findings emerged regarding the association between RWA and Honesty–Humility, which was found to be positive by [Sibley, Harding, Perry, Asbrock, and Duckitt \(2010\)](#), but negative by [Leone, Chirumbolo, et al. \(2012\)](#).

A more fine-grained level of analysis could clarify such contrasting findings. Convincing theoretical and empirical arguments suggest that narrow traits (vs broad dimensions) can provide a better understanding of the network underlying personality characteristics and external criteria (e.g., [Akrami & Ekehammar, 2006](#)). It has been argued ([Leone, Desimoni, & Chirumbolo, 2012](#)) that Honesty (sincerity and fairness) and Humility components (greed avoidance and modesty) are divergently related to authoritarian

attitudes. SDO and RWA should be negatively predicted by Humility because being highly interested in social status and considering oneself as superior (i.e. being low in Humility) appear core motivations for adopting conservative/authoritarian attitudes emphasizing preferences for hierarchy vs. equality. Instead, Honesty appears to be consistent with an established interpretation of the formal norms governing interpersonal relationships that matches positively with the conventional and traditional mores reflected in RWA ([Sibley et al., 2010](#)). Consistently, [Leone, Chirumbolo, et al. \(2012\)](#) found that Humility was negatively associated with SDO and – more weakly – RWA; moreover, RWA and Honesty were positively linked, once other influences were taken into account ([Leone, Desimoni, et al., 2012](#)).

A conceptual differentiation between the narrower definitions of Openness–Curiosity and Openness–Culture might help to clarify the Openness–RWA association ([Sibley & Duckitt, 2014](#)). Openness–Curiosity, comprising Openness facets closer to originality and anti-conformism (i.e. aesthetic appreciation and unconventionality), is responsible for the main bulk of the association observed at the broad trait level; instead, Openness–Culture<sup>1</sup>, comprising facets reliant on intellect and cognition (i.e. inquisitiveness and

\* Corresponding author. Address: Dipartimento di Psicologia dei Processi di Sviluppo e di Socializzazione, Via dei Marsi, 78, 00185 Roma, Italy. Tel.: +39 0649917921.

E-mail address: [marta.desimoni@uniroma1.it](mailto:marta.desimoni@uniroma1.it) (M. Desimoni).

<sup>1</sup> Such labels may depend heavily on the specific inventory used to assess Openness. Terms such as Experiential and Cognitive ([Onraet, Van Hiel, Roets, & Cornelis, 2011](#)) might sound more satisfactory for the Openness facets of the NEO-PI, but less adequate to reflect Openness sub-components as operationalized in the HEXACO. A psychometric re-evaluation of Openness measures (both in the HEXACO and Big Five framework) directly aimed at differentiating the curiosity and culture components shall be considered. Nonetheless, the conceptual case for a fine-grained analysis of Openness effects appears strong ([Sibley & Duckitt, 2014](#)).

creativity) is negligibly related with RWA (Leone, Desimoni, et al., 2012). Openness-Curiosity is linked with the most conventional forms of authoritarianism (i.e., RWA) because its sub-facets imply a lifestyle poorly fitting with the conservative's appreciation for traditional norms and values. Instead, the sub-facets of Openness-Culture reflect an interest in knowledge (inquisitiveness) and problem-solving (creativity) that is not at odds with conservatism.

Our first aim (Study 1) is to replicate such specific disposition-ideology linkages in a wide sample. Differences in the effects of sub-components of common factors could turn out to be fairly unstable across samples because these sub-components are by definition intercorrelated, and random and systematic sampling and measurement errors may determine unstable results. Replication assuages such validity concerns (Asendorpf, Conner, De Fruyt, De Houwer, et al., 2013).

## 2. Interest as moderator of the disposition-Ideology association

Recent evidence suggests that the impact of dispositions on ideology is moderated by factors pertaining to the concept of political sophistication. In particular, interest in politics and political expertise have been found to moderate the RWA-SDO association and strengthen the specific associations between epistemic motives and conservatism, and between personality and voting (e.g., Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). Interest in politics was also found to moderate Humility and Openness-Curiosity associations with SDO and RWA, respectively (Leone, Chirumbolo, et al., 2012). High levels of interest in politics strengthens Humility association with SDO and Openness-Curiosity association with RWA. This moderator effect has been explained by the notion of stronger attitude constraint associated with such variables as having an interest in politics. Attitude constraint refers to the stronger availability of a left-right dimension, which appears to be the most widely spread and accessible political schema among the Western public. Attitude constraint and the accessibility of the left-right schema should be enhanced for those interested in politics, therefore making it easier to match their dispositional build-up with the best-fitting ideology (Jost et al., 2009). In study 2 we aimed at replicating further the hypotheses tested in study 1 and at confirming that interest in politics moderates disposition-ideology associations.

## 3. Study 1

We anticipated Humility, not Honesty, to relate uniquely (negatively) with SDO. We also expected Honesty and Humility to show opposite unique associations with RWA. We expected Openness-Curiosity to relate uniquely negatively with ideological attitudes, and no or negligible unique associations for Openness-Culture.

### 3.1. Method

#### 3.1.1. Participants and procedure

Eight-hundred-and-twenty Italian individuals (319 men, 501 women;  $M_{age} = 32.57$ ;  $SD = 14.39$ , range = 18–80) filled out self-report booklets. Participants were recruited using a 'snowballing' procedure: first-year psychology students were asked to recruit up to five adults, in exchange for course credit. Non-student respondents represented 54% of the sample.

#### 3.1.2. Measures

The HEXACO personality traits were measured using the 100-item version (HEXACO-100) of the HEXACO-PI-R (Lee & Ashton, 2004). As in previous research (e.g., Leone, Desimoni, et al., 2012) we computed the two component-scores of Honesty (8 items,

$\alpha = .84$ ) combining the sincerity and fairness facets, and Humility (8 items,  $\alpha = .80$ ) combining greed avoidance and modesty facets. Similarly, we computed an Openness-Curiosity score (8 items,  $\alpha = .82$ ) combining aesthetic appreciation and unconventionality facets, and an Openness-Culture score (8 items,  $\alpha = .77$ ) combining inquisitiveness and creativity. RWA was measured using Altemeyer's (1996) 30-item scale ( $\alpha = .92$ ). SDO was measured using Pratto et al.'s (1994) 16-item scale ( $\alpha = .87$ ).

## 3.2. Results

Zero-order correlations (Table 1, above diagonal) revealed that RWA was moderately and negatively correlated with Openness-Curiosity, Openness-Culture (more weakly) and Humility. SDO was correlated negatively with all personality components. Zero-order facet-level correlations (Table 2) indicated moderate negative associations between RWA, Unconventionality and Aesthetic Appreciation facets of Openness-Curiosity. RWA correlated more weakly with facets in Openness-Culture, and with Sincerity and Greed avoidance. SDO was negatively correlated with Modesty and (more weakly) with the other facets considered (except for Inquisitiveness). Recall though that our hypotheses concern unique effects, controlling for the shared variance among sub-components of common factors. We regressed RWA and SDO on the component scores of Honesty, Humility, Openness-Curiosity and Openness-Culture. Openness-Curiosity was substantially associated with RWA ( $\beta = -.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $r_{sp} = -.35$ ) while Openness-Culture was not ( $p > .15$ ). As anticipated, divergent associations emerged between Honesty-Humility and RWA: a positive coefficient for Honesty ( $\beta = .08$ ,  $p < .05$ ;  $r_{sp} = .07$ ) and a negative one for Humility ( $\beta = -.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $r_{sp} = -.11$ ). SDO was uniquely associated with Humility ( $-.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $r_{sp} = -.28$ ) and Openness-Curiosity ( $-.22$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $r_{sp} = -.17$ ). Honesty and Openness-Culture coefficients were non-significant.

## 4. Study 2

Findings from Study 1 are consistent with previous results regarding the differential pattern of relationships between Honesty, Humility and Openness components and Ideology (Leone, Chirumbolo, et al., 2012; Leone, Desimoni, et al., 2012). Study 2 aims at giving a further look at these associations and to seek a replication of previously found interactions among interest in politics and personality dimensions. We would also consider the association of Need for Closure (NFC) with conservative ideology (e.g., Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003), and investigate NFC as a possible mediator (Jugert, Cohrs, & Duckitt, 2009).

NFC refers to the expedient desire for any firm belief on a given topic, as opposed to confusion and is considered an important predictor of Ideology (e.g., Jost et al., 2003). It has been argued (Onraet et al., 2011; Sibley & Duckitt, 2014) that NFC shares some conceptual characteristics with Openness to Experience, and that therefore NFC may mediate Openness' association with RWA (Jugert et al., 2009). We will here replicate this pattern, considering NFC as a possible mediator of Openness-Culture and Openness-Curiosity association with RWA. We would also, in an exploratory fashion, investigate whether NFC mediates the associations of Honesty and Humility and ideological attitudes, and those between Openness components and SDO.

### 4.1. Method

#### 4.1.1. Participants and procedure

Five-hundred-and-eighty-six individuals (275 men, 311 women;  $M_{age} = 34.25$ ;  $SD = 12.74$ , range = 19–73) completed an

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