



Big-Five personality prospectively predicts Social Dominance Orientation and Right-Wing Authoritarianism

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ABSTRACT

A full cross-lagged panel design examined the bidirectional effects of the Big-Five personality dimensions on Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) and Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) over 9 months ($N = 190$ undergraduates). Consistent with the Dual Process Cognitive-Motivational Model, SDO and RWA exhibited markedly different personality bases. Low Agreeableness predicted change in the motivational goal for group-based dominance and superiority (SDO), whereas Openness to Experience predicted change in the motivational goal for social cohesion and collective security (RWA). Extending previous longitudinal research, this study indicates that the effect of personality on ideology is unidirectional, as RWA and SDO did not predict reciprocal prospective change in broad-bandwidth personality. These findings are consistent with a model in which relatively stable broad-bandwidth personality traits shape ideological attitudes over even relatively short time periods, and not the reverse.

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1. Introduction

Duckitt (2001) argued that Social Dominance Orientation (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) and Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1998) reflect dual aspects of a Cognitive-Motivational system underlying individual differences in prejudice. According to Duckitt, SDO and RWA are defined not as immutable personality-type traits but rather ideological attitudes that express relatively independent motivational goals for group-based dominance and superiority (in the case of SDO), and social cohesion and collective security (in the case of RWA). Duckitt's (2001) Dual Process Cognitive-Motivational Model (DPM) posits that these two motivational goals are made chronically salient by schematic perceptions of the social world, which are in turn the result of the linear combination (and possible interaction) of socio-structural characteristics and stable individual differences in personality (see Duckitt & Sibley, 2010, for a review). The model thus makes explicit predictions about the direction of causal effects between personality, ideology and prejudice.

A good case is emerging from a number of independent longitudinal studies examining causal effects in support of the DPM. SDO and RWA have been shown to exert cross-lagged effects on sexism (Sibley, Wilson, & Duckitt, 2007a), generalized prejudice (Asbrock, Sibley, & Duckitt, 2010), and meritocracy and social policy attitudes over time (Sibley & Duckitt, 2010a). These and other findings

generally suggest that, consistent with the DPM, SDO and RWA prospectively predict prejudice and related system-justifying ideologies. A picture of the variables that predict SDO and RWA longitudinally is also beginning to emerge. Consistent with the DPM, dangerous and competitive worldview have been shown to prospectively predict SDO and RWA over time (Sibley, Wilson, & Duckitt, 2007b) and, of direct relevance to the current investigation, Agreeableness and Openness to Experience have been shown to exert independent cross-lagged effects on SDO and RWA (Sibley & Duckitt, 2010b).

While these studies generally provide support for the predicted direction of effects, there is less evidence ruling out the alternative reverse pathways. In their assessment of the longitudinal effects of personality on SDO and RWA, Sibley and Duckitt (2010b) did not test a full cross-lagged panel design, and thus were unable to examine whether SDO and RWA might exert reciprocal cross-lagged effects on personality. Testing this alternative causal direction is important for the DPM, as a central tenet of the model is that personality should predict ideology and not the reverse. As Sibley and Duckitt (2010b) asserted, if SDO and RWA were shown to have equivalent, or possibly even stronger cross-lagged effects on broad-bandwidth dimensions of personality, this would raise serious questions about whether SDO and RWA are Cognitive-Motivational variables produced by personality, or are more trait-like in nature as Altemeyer (1998) initially implied.

Here we provide the first full cross-lagged design assessing the causal relationships between personality and ideological attitudes in the DPM. In doing so, we test for potential reciprocal effects – in particular whether SDO and RWA predict personality over time.

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1.1. The Dual Process Model

Generalized prejudice may stem primarily from two distinct aspects of personality, characterized by low Openness to Experience in the case of RWA, and low Agreeableness in the case of SDO (Ekehammar & Akrami, 2003; Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). According to the DPM, individuals low in Agreeableness are more likely to pursue hedonistic and self-interested goals, displaying little concern for the possible conflicting interests of others. Agreeableness should predict SDO as the tough-minded, self-centered characteristics of those low in this personality trait should cause them to see the world as a socially competitive Darwinist jungle, in which might is right and winning is everything (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). Moreover, those low in Agreeableness should tend to value power and be sensitive to situations signaling resource scarcity and competition. Individuals low in Openness, on the other hand, should be more likely to value clear and unambiguous moral precepts and rules describing how the social world should operate (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). People low in Openness should therefore be more sensitive to threats to social stability and security and consequently become increasingly motivated to seek group-based social cohesion, control and collective security as indexed by RWA.

Research examining the antecedents of ideology indicates that heightened exposure to societal threat increases RWA (Duckitt & Fisher, 2003) whereas heightened exposure to social competition and resource scarcity increases SDO (Guimond, Dambrun, Michinov, & Duarte, 2003; Sibley et al., 2007b). In contrast, research directly testing the hypothesized causal effects of personality on SDO and RWA remains limited and, when available, tends to rely on analyses of cross-sectional data (e.g., Duckitt, 2001; Sibley & Duckitt, 2009; Van Hiel, Cornelius, & Roets, 2007).

Sibley and Duckitt (2010b) recently sought to address this shortcoming, providing a unique test of the hypothesized causal relationship between the personality and the ideological DPM components of SDO and RWA using longitudinal data. Examining the cross-lagged effects of Big-Five personality (measured at Time 1) on RWA and SDO (measured at Time 1 and 2) over a 1-year period, low levels of Agreeableness produced increases in the competitive-driven motivation for group-based dominance and superiority (indexed by SDO) and low levels of Openness produced increases in the threat-driven motivation for social cohesion and collective security (indexed by RWA). These effects controlled for the concurrent associations between personality and RWA and SDO at Time 1, and the within-measure longitudinal associations between RWA and SDO. This study thus provided preliminary evidence consistent with the premise that personality predicts change in SDO and RWA.

Sibley and Duckitt (2010b) acknowledged that they were unable to rule out the possibility of bi-directional effects where SDO and RWA may predict personality over time. Reciprocal effects within the DPM have in-fact been observed on at least one occasion – an unexpected reciprocal effect was identified in which RWA predicted changes in dangerous worldview over time (Sibley et al., 2007b). Social conformity has been consistently shown to relate directly to RWA independently of a dangerous worldview (Duckitt, 2001) whereas the association between Tough-Mindedness and SDO is fully mediated by competitive worldview. Changes in social conformity over time therefore may result in increasingly authoritarian attitudes that may perhaps in turn be justified by viewing the social world as more dangerous (Sibley et al., 2007b).

1.2. The present research

We examine the differential effects of Big-Five personality dimensions on SDO and RWA as predicted by the DPM using a longitudinal (9-month) cross-lagged panel design. The analysis of longitudinal data allows an assessment of potential causality that

can only be inferred from cross-sectional designs. Moreover, we were able to extend prior research by testing a full cross-lagged design including personality and ideological attitude measures at both times to assess simultaneous change in both the hypothesized direction (personality predicting SDO and RWA) but also the reverse direction (SDO and RWA predicting changes in personality).

Consistent with Sibley and Duckitt (2010b), Agreeableness should exert a causal effect on the competitive-driven motivation for group-based dominance and superiority as indexed by SDO whereas low levels of Openness and high levels of Conscientiousness should causally affect RWA by heightening the threat-driven motivation for social cohesion and collective security. Extending their findings, we predict that neither SDO nor RWA will demonstrate a significant reciprocal effect on any of the Big-Five personality dimensions – any such effects would probably only manifest over a very long timeframe.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and procedure

Data were collected from 475 participants (128 male, 347 female; $M_{\text{age}} = 19.63$, $SD = 3.34$) at Time 1 (267 White/European, 39 Maori/Pacific Nations, 122 Asian, 34 Indian, 13 'other'). Participants in the Time 1 sample completed the questionnaire voluntarily at the end of undergraduate laboratory sessions. Participants were asked to list their email address on the last page of the survey so that they could be contacted to participate in an online follow-up questionnaire. All participants consented to being contacted and listed their email address.

The 191 people (42%) included in our final analyses responded to the email follow-up questionnaire, administered 9 months later (46 male, 81 female; 118 White/European, 13 Maori/Pacific Nations, 46 Asian, 13 Indian, 1 'other'). These data have not been previously published.

2.2. Materials

Identical measures were administered at both time points.

SDO and RWA were each measured during both phases using eight balanced items from the respective scales developed by Sidanius and Pratto (1999) and Altemeyer (1998). The SDO scale included items such as, "Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups" (protrait), and "No one group should dominate in society" (contrait). The RWA scale contained items such as "The only way our country can get through the crisis ahead is to get back to our traditional values, put some tough leaders in power, and silence the troublemakers spreading bad ideas" (protrait), and "Our country needs free thinkers who will have the courage to defy traditional ways, even if this upsets many people" (contrait). Items were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) and were averaged so that higher scores represented higher levels of SDO and RWA.

Big-Five personality markers were each assessed using 6-item scales selected from the IPIP (Goldberg, 1999). Example items were as follows; Extraversion: "Talk to a lot of different people at parties" (protrait) and "Am quiet around strangers" (contrait); Agreeableness: "Sympathize with others' feelings" (protrait), and "Feel little concern for others" (contrait); Conscientiousness: "Like order" (protrait), and "Often forget to put things back in their proper place" (contrait); Neuroticism: "Have frequent mood swings" (protrait), and "Am relaxed most of the time" (contrait); Openness to Experience: "Am full of ideas" (protrait), and "Am not interested in abstract ideas" (contrait). Items were rated on a scale ranging from 1 (very inaccurate) through the midpoint of 4 (neither

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