Big Five Personality Traits and Political Orientation: An Inquiry into Political Beliefs

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Introduction

Personality research centered on the Big Five personality traits have heavily impacted our understanding in regards to what forces orient a person on a political spectrum. Examining how personality differences interact with political orientation, this research seeks to provide information on what makes someone either more or less likely to be liberal or conservative based on their temperament. In this paper, previous personality research is synthesized into one discussion centered on what the effects of each trait are and how they impact political orientation, the heritability of personality, and what implications there are for such research in the realm of political psychology and political discourse in general.

Effects of Personality on Political Orientation

In the first part of this paper, I cover the effects of personality on a person's political orientation by portraying contemporary research on the matter, and in order to do so I will first assess what each trait is, how much it correlates to political orientation, and potential reasons as to why the trait may affect political orientation. I will begin this section's discussion with the personality trait openness to experience, and then move on to trait conscientiousness, trait extroversion, trait agreeableness, and finally wrapping up the section with trait neuroticism.

Before moving on to the discussion, however, it must be mentioned that personality traits, like most psychological traits, are probabilistic and not deterministic (Plomin, 2018). In other words, because a person's personality may subject them to an increased likelihood that they manifest X in their life, in our case political orientation, that does not mean that they will automatically manifest X (Plomin, 2018). For instance, a common example used among personality researchers is that if a person is extremely introverted, that does not mean they cannot become a car salesman or do really well at car sales, or a career that involves a high degree of social interaction. Their introversion simply indicates that they will be less likely than a person who is extremely extroverted to manifest such a career choice. There is nothing that is stopping an introvert from trying to become a car salesman, but it would be fighting an uphill battle in terms of interest, as well as the ability to persevere. Introverts get exhausted from too much social interaction, whereas extroverts tend to crave social interaction. Most people fall in the middle in terms of their level of extroversion or any other trait that is being measured, but differences among people in career choice tend to manifest themselves at the extremes (Peterson, 2017b). So, only the most extroverted people tend to go into professions where high levels of social interaction are not only helpful, but a necessity, and only the least extroverted people tend to choose careers whereby there is little to no social interaction (Peterson, 2017b).

This paper is not written as an endorsement of policy implications or eugenics, rather it is being written to make the public aware of just one of the aspects of political orientation that is often overlooked. Most research focuses on environmental factors that impact political orientation such as income, upbringing, nutrition, and so on, and while those factors are extremely important to understand, the genetic/natural component is often ignored. The likely reason this research is overlooked is due to the low malleability of personality traits (Plomin, 2018). Personality is not something that can be shifted drastically by environmental factors, which only becomes truer as time progresses (Plomin, 2018). Again, it is not to say that an extrovert or introvert cannot manifest the actions typically portrayed by their mirror at the opposite end of the spectrum, it is just that their temperamental proclivities do not support it.

Trait Openness

Beginning with trait openness, I first want to explain what it is, its two different aspects, how much it correlates to political orientation, and potential reasons as to why the trait may affect political orientation.

Trait openness, often referred to as openness to experience, is the first of the Big Five personality traits that deals with "one's willingness to try new things as well as engage in imaginative and intellectual activities" (Annabelle, 2020). People who are high in openness tend to be those that we would consider to be "open-minded," the people who are willing to change their minds or try new things that other people would not. It is also the people who tend to find pleasure in unconventional forms of stimuli (Peterson, 2017a). For example, someone who is high in trait openness would be more likely to paint a wall in their house purple, and actually enjoy that wall being purple, more than someone who is lower in trait openness who would be more likely to stick to conventional colors such a beige, white, or cream. They would be okay with such an unconventional stimulus that most people shy away from, partly because they can envision it more abstractly and are willing to venture outside of whatever socially-constructed domain is being perpetuated in a given population. An easy way to imagine this is that if most of society accepted that purple walls were stylish and everybody had them, then those who are least likely to adopt purple walls are those with higher openness, as you would have to be willing to venture out of the current domain, one where people mostly adopt purple as a color scheme for their walls.

People higher in openness to experience are also those that are interested in ideas, so if you are talking with somebody that is high in openness, they will quickly try and switch the conversation to a discussion about ideas, usually abstract ideas (Peterson, 2017a). Openness as a trait is heavily correlated with general intelligence and IQ, and as a result of learning faster than average people do, you will be more likely to look at new ideas that are more abstract, as it is a natural progression that

one will face as they venture through life (Peterson, 2015). Essentially, the reason that those with high openness are more interested in abstract ideas are because they get bored with ideas that are easier for them to learn, they do not wish to constantly relearn ideas that they have already been exposed to, and their imagination is always running.

While openness itself is just one trait with the aforementioned qualities, there are two widely accepted aspects to trait openness, just as there are two widely accepted aspects to the other four traits that can be broken into two as well, and those are intellect and openness (DeYoung, et al., 2007). Both intellect and openness are heavily correlated with each other, so if you are high in one, then you are more likely to be higher in the other and vice versa (Peterson, 2015). The intellect aspect of trait openness is the aspect associated with qualities such as creativity, imagination, a love for abstract ideas, the ability to understand complex ideas, thinking quickly, having a rich vocabulary, the ability to handle a large amount of information, and the ability to formulate ideas clearly and concisely (DeYoung, et al., 2007). Intellect and IQ are almost exactly the same thing, however, there are individuals who have high IQs, but are low in trait openness, and as a result low in intellect as well, hence why IQ is not a trait itself and trait openness is separate (Peterson, 2015).

The openness aspect of trait openness is the aspect associated with qualities such as enjoying the beauties of nature, aesthetics, a love and need for art, a love for music, the ability to see beauty in things others do not, getting lost in thought more than others, daydreaming more than others, a love for literature such as poetry, and the ability to notice emotional aspects in paintings or pictures (DeYoung, et al., 2007). Like mentioned above, the openness aspect of trait openness allows one to enjoy stimuli that others simply cannot understand, or would not bother to try and understand in the first place (Peterson, 2017a). An easy way to explain openness as an aspect, or even trait openness as a whole, is that trying to explain X that is outside a given domain to somebody low in openness that is operating within that domain, is like "trying to explain color to somebody that is colorblind" (Peterson, 2017a). Those lower in openness are not wired the same as those high in openness, and as a result there is a major disconnect that occurs between individuals on opposite ends of the distribution. It is nobody's fault one way or the other, rather fate manifesting itself in people's personalities.

Moving on to how trait openness correlates with political orientation, the higher you are in trait openness, the higher the probability that you identify as a liberal on a binary political spectrum (Gerber et al., 2011). Since

> Openness to Experience is associated with positive responses to novel stimuli . . . researchers posit that individuals high in this trait are more likely to respond favorably to liberal social policies, which often involve acceptance of unconventional behaviors, and liberal economic policies,

which may involve a willingness to support proposals that entail new
government involvement in the economy. (Gerber et al., 2011, p. 269)

In a study by Gerber (2011) a two standard deviation increase in trait openness was
correlated at .66 with liberalism (Gerber et al., 2011). The variable of liberalism
was self-reported in Gerber's study, and it was also broken down into two different
aspects as well, being social liberalism, and economic liberalism under the same
constraints (Gerber et al., 2011). Under social liberalism, there was a .53 correlation
with a two standard deviation increase in trait openness, and under economic
liberalism, there was .48 correlation with trait openness (Gerber et al., 2011). The
results clearly indicate that as trait openness increases, so does their liberalism
(Gerber et al., 2011).

Liberals are more likely to be higher in trait openness because liberals are
always pushing the boundaries in terms of policy, whether that be through social or
economic means. Liberals are the ones that have shifted society throughout the
years to an increasingly progressive world. Liberals are the ones willing to adopt
new ideas that lay outside the current political structure, and they are also the people
who are coming up with the new ideas that can potentially be adopted by the rest
of society.

Partially why change tends to be so slow in politics is because people are at
war with each other's personality differences. For example, if you want to convince
a conservative, also someone lower in openness, to adopt a new policy that is
outside their current political system, they will likely object to your plea. The
objection to your new policy will only magnify the more that policy is likely to alter
the political system. A caveat to the objection would be if the policy was rooted in
historical precedent, and since conservatives, by definition, are both resistant to
change and favor traditionally held values, they may adopt the position without any
objections. For example, in 2015 gay marriage was officially legalized in the United
States, but many conservatives were not fond of the decision to allow them to
marry. If a policy was to radically alter the system again, but back to historical
precedent or even in the direction of precedent, then there would be little or no
objection. It is only when something has not been tried before in that specific
domain, or further in the past, that the fundamental need for openness tends to
manifest itself. Eventually the conservatives will come to cherish the policy as an
unalterable piece of legislation, but that can take a very long time to happen.

Wrapping up trait openness, the reason that individuals high in trait
openness are more liberal, is because in order to adopt something new, you first
have to create something new and creativity is associated with the aspect of intellect
in trait openness (DeYoung, et al., 2007). Individuals high in trait openness are
those that are also willing to take the risk of venturing outside their current domain
to potentially alter their existence in a positive manner. Standing at a correlation of
.66, trait openness is the highest predictor of liberalism that the study by Gerber

highlights, even more than income, which was correlated at -.17, meaning the more money one makes, the more conservative they become (Gerber et al., 2011). Trait openness is just one trait, but certainly the most predictive of political orientation.

Trait Conscientiousness

Moving on to trait conscientiousness, much like trait openness, I first want to explain what it is, its two different aspects, how much it correlates to political orientation, and potential reasons as to why the trait may affect political orientation.

Trait conscientiousness is the second of the Big Five personality traits that "reflects a family of constructs that describes individual differences in the propensity to be self-controlled, responsible to others, hardworking, orderly, and rule abiding" (Jackson, Roberts, 2015, p.2). People who are high in conscientiousness are those that we would consider to be the "workaholics" in our society, and not just workaholics, but also those who are perpetuating a particular system (Peterson, 2017a). For example, someone who is higher in trait conscientiousness will be more likely to work seventy hours per week than someone on the opposite end of the distribution (Peterson, 2017c). People who are high in conscientiousness do not mind working long hours, almost as if they cannot be doing something that is unproductive. A person high in conscientiousness will look at someone on the other end of the distribution as if they are lazy or not hard-working, and there is often no recognition of temperamental differences at work that allow the person high in trait conscientiousness to work long hours without getting as exhausted as those who are lower in conscientiousness. People lower in conscientiousness need more leisure time otherwise they are miserable, whereas conscientious people need less to feel the same way (Yang, et al., 2008). In addition to working very hard, individuals with higher conscientiousness are the type of individuals who you may know that always have to have their house spotless in terms of cleanliness, as conservatives tend to be more disgust sensitive, as well as just wanting to maintain a state of order (Peterson, 2017e).

In order to best understand conscientiousness, it is best to quickly break it down into its two aspects: industriousness and orderliness. By breaking up the two aspects of conscientiousness, much like was done above in the previous section on trait openness, we will be able to examine both aspects as they relate to conscientiousness as a whole, portraying what those who are conscientious are like.

The industriousness aspect of trait conscientiousness is associated with individual qualities such as the ability to orient oneself towards a goal and foster its manifestation through hard-work, an annoyance with time-wasting, finding it easy to get down to work, avoiding procrastination, working quickly, and not being easily distracted (DeYoung, et al., 2007). Industriousness encompasses the hard-workers in society who are heavily goal oriented, and are bothered by those who distract them from their goal or are not working as hard as them (Peterson, 2017e).

The interesting thing about conscientiousness, is that no matter what domain a conscientiousness person is placed into, they will be extremely productive just as a person who is extremely creative will be creative in any domain they are subjected to (Peterson, 2017c). For example, if a person with high conscientious was to move from managing a coal plant to then managing something entirely different such as a restaurant, they would work just as hard managing the restaurant as they did in managing the coal plant. Productivity may be lower at first, as they need to garner expertise in the new industry, but over time they will be just as productive.

The second aspect of trait conscientiousness is orderliness, which is associated with individual qualities such as the desire for an organized environment, a love for order, keeping things clean, scheduling events and sticking to them, annoyance with unorganized or messy people, a desire for perfection, sticking to a routine, and abiding by the law or upholding rules (DeYoung, et al., 2007). People who are high in orderliness are the people referenced above that crave cleanliness, but it is not as simple as only cleanliness, as those higher in orderliness crave order as it is defined by themselves. For example, a person high in orderliness might despise messy rooms, but they may have their own room organized in an unconventional manner, but still fostering order as defined by the individual. So, if a person were to mess up the rooms of two people each with the same levels of orderliness, but with different systems of organization, then the orderly people would reorganize their rooms according their own unique value structures.

The origins of trait conscientiousness are somewhat of a mystery, especially at the upper ends of the distribution. Its utility is most likely derived from the need to regulate an environment so that chaos is mitigated, resulting in a more stable and predictable environment that poses less of a risk to you and members of your in-group (Peterson, 2017e). While it almost appears to be common sense, it is a mystery how such upper-ends of the distribution arise because individuals must sacrifice other parts of their life in order to maintain such a drive on the industriousness side, though the practicality of orderliness is more apparent (Peterson, 2017c). I imagine that since life was unbearably difficult for most people throughout most of human history, the need for a temperament surrounding hard-work arose. The practicality of conscientiousness is still evident today as well, because conscientiousness is a great predictor of career success, as defined by monetary achievement and status (Roberts, et al., 2011). It is refreshing to know it is a good indicator of career success as well, because that means society is becoming egalitarian as the people who rise up the dominance hierarchy are the most hardworking, though many other factors are present.

Moving on to how conscientiousness correlates with political orientation, the higher the levels of trait conscientious present in an individual, the more likely they will be conservative (Gerber, et al., 2011). According to the study by Gerber

et al., "individuals high on Conscientiousness tend to be attracted to social norms and achievement striving" and "these response tendencies likely explain why those high on this trait are more likely to reject the challenges to social norms that often accompany liberal social policies, as well as liberal economic policies, which may be seen as undermining incentives for individual effort" (Gerber, et al., 2011, p. 269). In the study, the effect of a two standard deviation increase in trait conscientiousness was negatively correlated with self-reported liberalism at correlation of -.34, meaning that as conscientiousness increases the amount of liberalism decrease, and as a result people tend to shift more towards conservatism (Gerber, et al., 2011). Furthermore, the correlation between a two standard deviation increase in conscientiousness and social liberalism was -.26, and the correlation for economic liberalism was at -.22 (Gerber et al., 2011). The results clearly indicate that as trait conscientiousness increases, the level of conservatism increases (Gerber, et al., 2011).

Partially why individuals who are higher in trait conscientiousness tend to be more conservative is because they want a stable and predictable environment around them that has familiarity. If the world is going fine and everything around is orderly, then from the perspective of someone high in trait conscientiousness there is no need to venture outside of the domain you are operating in, as it can introduce chaos that manifests itself in a disruption of your orderly and stable environment. It is a "stick to what you know" strategy that has its benefits, as well as its flaws. Those who are higher in trait conscientiousness find it easier to climb the dominance hierarchy, but in the same breath, those people may be perpetuating a system that is harmful to them without them even knowing it. Placing that notion into political terms, a very clear example of the perpetuation of something harmful would-be slavery. If one were to travel back in time to various countries where abolition movements were taking place, then it is likely that those who were the biggest supporters of slavery would, on average, show higher levels of trait conscientiousness. While conscientiousness would factor into a broader narrative that includes other personality traits and environmental issues, knowing such information sheds a better perspective on why historical and current events were manifested.

Wrapping up trait conscientiousness, standing at a correlation of -.34, trait conscientiousness is the second highest predictor of liberalism that was measured, where the more conscientiousness a person is the more likely they are to reject liberalism and adopt conservatism (Gerber, et al., 2011). Trait conscientiousness is just one personality trait that affects someone's political orientation, but when paired with trait openness it becomes an even larger predictor of political orientation, and that predictor only grows when the other three traits are added in. For example, if you were told to guess whether or not someone you met was either a liberal or conservative, and all you knew about them was that they were high in

conscientiousness and low in openness, then you can almost be certain they are a conservative. It is not a guarantee they are conservative, but in all likelihood they would be, or at the very least less liberal that they otherwise would be if they were to consider themselves liberal.

Trait Extroversion

Moving on to trait extraversion, I first want to explain what it is, its two different aspects, how much it correlates to political orientation, and potential reasons as to why the trait may affect political orientation.

Trait extraversion, commonly referred to as introversion-extraversion, is the third of the Big Five personality traits which "is a higher order dimension of personality reflecting tendencies to experience and exhibit positive affect, assertive behavior, decisive thinking, and desires for social attention" (Wilt, & Revelle, 2009, as cited in Wilt & Revelle, 2016, p. 1). People who are high in trait extraversion "are characterized by energy, dominance, spontaneity, and sociability, whereas more introverted individuals tend to be described as more lethargic, inhibited, reflective, and quiet" (Wilt, & Revelle 2016, p. 1).

Most people are familiar with the trait of extraversion as it is the most widely talked about trait outside of academia, but extraversion is a bit more complex than people make it out to be. People are correct in pointing out that highly extraverted people are the socialites in society, the people who are always talking to somebody or doing some socially-oriented activity, as they just enjoy the company of people. Extraverted people are also, however, those that show increased levels of positive emotion in comparison with their peers in the way that a mitigation of trait neuroticism does not accomplish (Costa, et al., 1980). A mitigation of trait neuroticism, the last trait we will talk about, would result in a decrease in negative emotion which is different than an increase in positive emotion (Costa, et al., 1980). Somebody is capable of experiencing little negative emotion and also lots of positive emotion, but they may also experience little positive emotion as well, there is no guarantee either way (Costa, et al., 1980). Lastly, the highly extraverted people are those that tend to be the leaders in a given dominance hierarchy, as they are very assertive which grants them the gift of persuasion and the leadership qualities necessary for commanding sets of people (Campbell, et al., 2003).

People who are lower in trait extraversion would be those individuals who get exhausted by social interaction. Often times, these are the people who do not go to as many social events, or the kind who want to leave earlier whenever they do. If a highly introverted person, someone low in extraversion, were to go to a party and want to leave early, it is not because they are being rude, it is simply because they get exhausted by what others may find revitalizing. Introverts are also the people who somewhat lack a sense of humor in the broader sense, being that their

levels of positive emotion, and even expression of positive emotion, are hampered by their temperamental proclivities. Lastly, introverts are also those that are unlikely to work in leadership positions in environments where social interaction is common. An introvert would be more likely to attain a leadership position where they are able to separate themselves from social interaction most of the day, which would result in an overrepresentation in fields such as computer programming, law, or accounting. If one thinks about it logically, it almost a truism that such people would be more equip for such roles as long as they are able to stay assertive when needed, because if an extraverted were to sit at a desk all day with little social interaction, they would wither on the vine.

In order to best understand trait extraversion, it is best to quickly break it down into its two aspects: enthusiasm and assertiveness. By breaking down the two aspects of extraversion, much like was done above in the previous sections, we will be able to examine both aspects as they relate to conscientiousness as a whole, portraying what those who are conscientious are like, lending us clues to its effects on political orientation.

The enthusiasm aspect of trait extraversion is associated with individual qualities such as making friends easily, keeping people around oneself, easy to get to know, having lots of fun, laughing a lot, getting caught up in excitement, higher impulsivity, very enthusiastic, and expresses their feelings more outwardly than others (DeYoung, et al., 2007). Individuals high in enthusiasm are those that always have a smile on their face and love social interaction, much like the stereotypical extravert does. Their impulsivity lends to being lost in the moment at times, as they are wired to take advantage of fun and enjoyable things while fun and enjoyable things are there (Campbell, et al., 2003; Revelle, 1997). It may seem like common sense to take advantage of fun and enjoyable things whenever they present themselves, but it is the rate at which they take advantage that distinguishes them from introverted people.

The second aspect of trait extroversion, assertiveness, is associated with individual qualities such as taking charge, a talent for influencing people, a talent for captivating people, seeing oneself as a good leader, very persuasive, very vocal about their opinions, and earlier to act than others (DeYoung, et al., 2007). Individuals high in assertiveness make very good leaders, as they have the ability to command people into doing what they need in an effective manner (Campbell, et al., 2003). These individuals tend to favor careers whereby they can exercise control over others, though it is not for maniacal reasons, as they are just wired to seek careers whereby they are able to express their personality in the world. For example, a job that a person high in assertiveness would seek would be that of a politician, where the job entails influencing others to get what you feel is best implemented.

Moving on to how extraversion correlates with political orientation, the higher the levels of extraversion in a person, the more likely they will be a conservative (Gerber, et al., 2011). A two standard deviation increase in trait extraversion is correlated at -.08 with self-reported liberalism, meaning that the more extraverted somebody is, the more likely they are to be conservative or less liberal than they would otherwise be (Gerber, et al., 2011). Additionally, a two standard deviation increase in extraversion correlates at -.05 with social liberalism (Gerber, et al., 2011). For economic liberalism, a two standard deviation increase in extraversion correlates at -.14 (Gerber, et al., 2011).

Understanding why extraversion is a conservative-orienting trait seems more complex than it actually is. Since individuals higher in trait extraversion are happier individuals with higher levels of positive emotion, they are less likely to view the world as a place that needs alteration (Pavot, et al., 1990). If your perception is one of happiness, then you are, in a sense, blinded by the artificial veneer your mind places on to the world. If one's life is filled with more joy and excitement than another's, the rational thing to do would be to take advantage of it with your high assertiveness and you will be enthusiastic to do so, instead of trying to navigate through a new hierarchical structure where your happiness may be negatively impacted. Higher levels of extraversion foster the notion, "get the cooking while its hot" and as a result, they are more likely to stay fixated in one domain for longer periods of time than their peers who may abandon the domain in hopes of greater prosperity elsewhere. For example, if there is a perfectly good party that you and your friends are having fun at, then what is the point of leaving for another party across town that is just another 30 people larger? There would be little point in leaving, and the apparent utility of sacrificing something good for something that has only a chance of being better is not perceived as a smart move. The same situation can also be thought up in terms of policy, so if life for the extravert is good under a certain policy, then there is no reason to abandon it and risk giving up what is working well.

Overall, I feel it is very important to reemphasize that just because something is correlated, does not mean it is bound to happen. There are plenty of extroverted people who may be high in openness for example, and would gladly leave their domain in order to try and find something better. The two standard deviation increase in extroversion and liberalism are only correlated at -.08, and it is the second least impactful personality trait out of the Big Five on political orientation (Gerber, et al., 2011).

Trait Agreeableness

Moving on to trait agreeableness, I first want to explain what it is, its two different aspects, how much it correlates to political orientation, and potential reasons as to why the trait may affect political orientation.

Trait agreeableness is the fourth of the Big Five personality traits, which is a trait characterized by showing a compassion for others, a self-sacrificing character, the avoidance of conflict, and a nurturing mentality. People who are high in trait agreeableness are the people we think of that are very kind and will not spark conflict even when their situation does not correspond with their ideal. Those high in agreeableness are willing to sacrifice what they want or need for what others want or need, coming at their own expense (Jensen-Campbell, et al., 2002). Agreeable people tend to be the followers in society, which is partially because they hate conflict and if you are leading a group or people. In a work environment, for instance, the people underneath you are not going to be particularly fond of you, especially when you do something they do not like and that is particularly distressful for those with higher levels of agreeableness (Chu, et al., 2015).

The best way to describe agreeableness is by describing it as the "motherly trait," being that it likely arose as a result to foster cooperation between members of the in-group, as well as the ability to care for infants or children without being upset (Weisberg, et al., 2011; Peterson, 2017d). If there is an infant that needs a person's care and attention, then everything that infant does is right and the infant cannot be wrong, and as a result it is best if somebody who is willing to constantly capitulate for a few years is in charge of taking care of it (Peterson, 2017d). If the parent or guardian gets upset at the infant and neglects it or conflict breaks out around the infant, then the infant is harmed, which is not an effective long-term survival tactic in perpetuating the existence of one's species, especially in a species where infants are entirely unable to take care of themselves (Peterson, 2017d). One of the largest gender differences in personality between men and women, actually, lies with women showing higher levels of agreeableness, likely for such a reason (Weisberg, et al., 2011; Peterson, 2017d).

On the opposite end of the agreeableness spectrum there are people that are considered disagreeable, and they are the people that do not really care about your feelings and are out for their own self-interest (Jensen-Campbell, et al., 2001). Disagreeable people reject altruistic tendencies and are willing to start conflicts in order to foster their own interests (Jensen-Campbell, et al., 2001; Peterson, 2017d). Disagreeable people reject authority under the mentality that they should not have to listen to you, because they are better than you and that is especially so when they are told to do something they do not want to (Peterson, 2017d). For example, if a very disagreeable employee is told to do their least favorite task at work for the next three hours by their manager, then the disagreeable person will get very upset and strongly resent whoever gave them the order.

In order to better understand trait agreeableness, it is best to break it down into its two aspects: compassion and politeness. By breaking down the two aspects of agreeableness, much like was done above in the previous sections, we will be able to examine both aspects as they relate to trait agreeableness as a whole,

portraying what those who are agreeable are like, lending us clues to its effects on political orientation.

The compassion aspect of trait agreeableness is associated with individual qualities such as strong interest in the problems of others, the feeling of others' emotions, caring about how others are doing, taking lots of time for others rather than oneself, having a soft side, and doing things for others (DeYoung, et al., 2007). The compassion aspect appears to be centered more around people and a genuine attitude to nurture their well-being, whereas the politeness aspect appears to be centered on avoiding conflict with people. Many people confuse compassion as the same thing as the enthusiasm aspect of extraversion, but that is not the case. Enthusiastic extraverted people like being around people in social contexts, but they might not care about you at all, they just like being around you. Compassionate people will actually care about you, though they may or may not be averse to varying levels of social interaction.

The politeness aspect of trait agreeableness is associated with individual qualities such as respecting authority, avoiding conflict, not finding pleasure from fights, not taking advantage of others, avoiding imposing their will on others, hating to seem pushy, and not out for personal gain (DeYoung, et al., 2007). The politeness aspect appears to be centered on avoiding conflict with people, more than anything else. Polite people do not like stepping on the toes of others and instead would rather help them achieve whatever their goals are, as opposed to competing with them (Peterson, 2017d).

Moving on to how agreeableness correlates with political orientation, the higher the levels of agreeableness in a person, the more likely they will be a liberal (Gerber, et al., 2011). A two standard deviation increase in trait extraversion is correlated at .02 with self-reported liberalism, meaning that the more agreeable somebody is the more likely they are to be liberal, or more liberal than they would otherwise be. (Gerber, et al., 2011) Additionally, a two standard deviation increase in agreeableness correlates at -.12 with social liberalism (Gerber, et al., 2011). For economic liberalism, a two standard deviation increase in extraversion correlates at .2 (Gerber, et al., 2011).

Understanding the results and the conflicting correlations between social liberalism and economic liberalism presents a problem that is explained by Gerber, where those higher in agreeableness are "more likely to respond sympathetically to individuals in economic need," thus being more economically liberal (p. 271). The explanation for agreeableness' correlation with economic liberalism appears obvious, but the researchers in the same study expected entirely different results for social liberalism, stating that an "explanation for this relationship may be that people high on Agreeableness are more likely to resist policies that challenge dominant social norms because they may threaten harmonious relationships" (Gerber, et al., p. 271).

The relationship between agreeableness and caring for others and their well-being would appear synonymous with increasingly liberal agenda, but the literature shows otherwise, hence the lower correlation between liberalism and agreeableness. Highly agreeable people would be adopting two opposing ideologies at the same time, but what happens is, is that instead of the creation of a neutralizing effect, the agreeable people adopt liberalism for economics and conservatism for social agenda. Those high in agreeableness may be compassionate lending them to adopt more liberal policies, but are also stepping on eggshells as to avoid conflict and disagreement politically among their in-group, as well as associated out-groups, orienting themselves toward conservatism. Agreeable people do not want to disrupt the status quo for fear of conflict, and instead adopt it (Gerber, et al., 2011, p. 271). An agreeable politician would be more likely to end up agreeing with members of their own party on issues they do not feel as passionate about in comparison to other issues they hold more dearly and even help manifest those ideas, all so that they do not have to risk engaging in an altercation. As to why there is a split between the adoption of social and economic liberalism when agreeableness rises, however, is unknown.

Trait Neuroticism

Moving on to trait neuroticism, I first want to explain what it is, its two different aspects, how much it correlates to political orientation, and potential reasons as to why the trait may affect political orientation.

Trait neuroticism, commonly referred to as emotional instability, is the third of the Big Five personality traits which is a personality trait associated with highly correlated negative emotions such as irritability, anger, sadness, anxiety, worry, hostility, self-consciousness, as well as emotional stability in the sense of regulating mood swings, usually in a negative manner such as irritation (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1993). "Neuroticism can be viewed as a heterogeneous trait consisting of multiple facets that are highly correlated but partially distinct, including anger, sadness, anxiety, worry, and hostility" (Weiss & Costa, 2005, as cited in Lahey, 2009). The underlying factor associated with neuroticism is that higher levels are characterized with mood swings sparked by irritation or frustration, whereas those who exhibit lower levels of trait neuroticism are relatively stable in terms of mood regulation (Lahey, 2009). An example of someone exhibiting high levels of trait neuroticism would be if someone becomes enraged every time they get cutoff in traffic.

In order to better understand trait neuroticism it is best to break it down into its two aspects: volatility and withdrawal. By breaking up the two aspects of neuroticism, much like was done above in the previous sections, we will be able to examine both aspects as they relate to trait neuroticism as a whole, portraying what

those who are neurotic are like, lending us clues to its effects on political orientation.

The volatility aspect of trait neuroticism is associated with individual qualities such as getting angry easily, getting irritated often, getting easily annoyed, often losing composure, moods tending to go up and down easily, and moods not being able to be kept under control (DeYoung, et al., 2007). Individuals high in volatility are known for having less stability in terms of their mood, characterized by a spark of negative emotion when their mood changes. The easiest way to picture volatility is by picturing a volatile stock market, where the market is moving up and down more erratically than normal over a given period of time, and apply that same concept on to a person's emotions rather than the stock market.

The withdrawal aspect of trait neuroticism is associated with individual qualities such as feeling sad often, being filled with doubts, being uncomfortable with oneself, feeling threatened easily, often feeling depressed, worrying about things often, being embarrassed easily, and afraid of many things (DeYoung, et al., 2007). Individuals with high levels of withdrawal are those that are extremely self-conscious, self-loathsome, and often in a state of depression (Lahey, 2009). These individuals would experience high anxiety in social situations, as they feel as if they are constantly being judged by those around them and trust issues accrue as a consequence.

The withdrawal aspect of trait neuroticism can best be conceptualized as the antithesis of the enthusiasm aspect of extroversion, operating with entirely different circuitry (Costa, et al., 1980). The withdrawal spectrum is concerned with how much negative emotion one manifests, and the enthusiasm spectrum is concerned with how much positive emotion one manifests. Just because a person is low in withdrawal, does not mean they will be high in enthusiasm or experience a magnitude of positive emotions. A person being low in withdrawal simply means that they are not experiencing much negative emotion and it has nothing to do with positive emotion, and though some correlations could be made, there is not causal relations.

Moving on to how neuroticism correlates with political orientation, the higher the levels of neuroticism in a person the more likely they will be a liberal (Gerber, et al., 2011). A two standard deviation increase in trait neuroticism is correlated at .26 with self-reported liberalism, meaning that the more neurotic somebody is the more likely they are to be liberal, or more liberal than they would otherwise be (Gerber, et al., 2011). Additionally, a two standard deviation increase in neuroticism correlates at .13 with social liberalism (Gerber, et al., 2011). For economic liberalism, a two standard deviation increase in neuroticism correlates at .43 (Gerber, et al., 2011).

Analyzing how neuroticism is positively correlated with liberalism, Gerber, et al. suggests that "because people who score high on Emotional Stability are less

likely to feel anxious about their economic futures, they respond less favorably to redistributive policies intended to strengthen broad economic security" (Gerber, et al., 2011, p. 271). The findings of Gerber et al.'s research corresponds with other studies as well, such as the study by Mondak et al. (2010), also showing that the more emotionally stable people are, the more likely they are to be conservative with the inverse of emotional stability implying that the more someone is neurotic, the more likely they will not be conservative (Mondak, et al., 2010). The conceptualization of trait neuroticism is best accomplished by imagining those who are unstable searching for paths that lead them to stability, whereas those who are emotionally stable will not be as interested because their situation does not warrant change.

The Heritability of the Personality

The heritability of psychological traits was once a mystery that plagued researchers as to how much of a role environment played in the fostering of a particular trait. Fortunately for science, however, with the emergence of what many deem as the DNA Revolution, many of the questions surrounding psychological traits can be now be answered. Most psychological traits, including those of personality traits, are considered polygenetic whereby many genes effect personality as opposed to just one or a couple (Plomin, 2018). For example, there is no "extraversion gene" or gene for any other personality trait, and instead the trait is manifested through thousands of smaller genes all working together to influence somebody's extraversion (Plomin, 2018). Polygenicity is a how almost every psychological trait is manifested with rare exceptions, which automatically wipes out the possibility of personality being entirely driven by environmental influences (Plomin, 2018).

By using twin studies to search for heritability of particular psychological traits we are able to get a pretty accurate measurement of a trait, though it is important to note that the more twins in the study, the more accurate the data becomes. Specifically, in relationship to the Big Five personality traits, a good study showing the heritability of each trait based on twin studies were as follows: neuroticism at 41%, extraversion at 53%, openness at 61%, agreeableness at 41%, and conscientiousness at 44% (Jang, et al. 1996). An additional twin study done on the heritability of the Big Five personality traits were as follows: neuroticism at 58%, extraversion at 57%, openness at 56%, agreeableness at 51%, and conscientiousness at 52% (Loehlin, et al., 1998). Such research utilizing hundreds of twins between the studies, suggests that while we do not have an exact number for how heritable each trait is, roughly speaking personality traits are around 50% heritable on average.

The average heritability of personality does not cover the effects of aging, however, where psychological traits tend to become more heritable as people

progress through life (Plomin, 2018). People tend to follow the guidance of their temperamental proclivities, and as a result construct an environment that best fosters those proclivities as they age (Plomin, 2018). For example, a person who is highly extraverted will be more likely to choose a career whereby they can express their extraversion, they will surround themselves with other extraverts as friends, and their extraversion will even have an effect on the way they vote, as covered above. So, as people go through life and usually have more control over their environment, the heritability of traits increases as opposed to decreases (Plomin, 2018). Ultimately, as time progresses and more twin studies are conducted, the accuracy of heritability estimations will only increase as more twins will round out the problems associated with outliers.

Overall, heritability is crucial to understand political leanings, because it means that if a society is to promote egalitarianism and actually accomplishes it to the best of their ability, then the environmental differences among people would minimize, thus maximizing genetic differences. An example of environmental differences minimizing would be in the Scandinavian countries, where equal opportunity among sexes is greater than anywhere in the world, and so any differences in the psychology between men and women would be due primarily to genetics as opposed to the environment. As a result of the maximization in genetic differences between sexes, or any other group for that matter, political problems that are commonly attributed to discriminatory beliefs may just be rooted in temperamental differences. For instance, women are more agreeable than men on average and in negotiating salary, they are less likely to bargain on their behalf as effectively as men would, thus making less money as a consequence. It was not a systemic issue that would cause women to be paid less in that regard, it is an innate difference between men and women that cause the difference in mean salary between the two groups. No matter the differences between groups, though, it is important to still treat people as individuals, but the research could explain why such differences manifest inequity in the world that often have policy implications.

Political Implications of Personality Research

In this section, I will highlight two more implications of this branch of personality research as it relates to political psychology and political discourse in general. Be sure to keep in mind the implication mentioned in the previous section covering heritability, as it is also important though already sufficiently covered.

The most obvious political implication of this branch of personality research is that political campaigns could one day be able to tailor how they advertise to each individual by only showing them what they are likely to sympathize with based on their own personality traits. For example, maybe the campaign creates ten different advertisements, and through companies like Google or Facebook they analyze your user data in order to determine which advertisement would be most

persuasive in getting you to vote for that candidate. Social media companies are already using user data to deliver personalized advertisements to their users, and political advertisements are no exception to the rule, though more could be done to tailor the advertisements to personality. The only difficulty is getting an accurate gauge of a person's personality, but a way around that would be for companies to have you answer brief surveys instead of watching a thirty second advertisement, much like the kind already found before in certain YouTube videos. Over time, the company would eventually accrue enough data to accurately determine your personality, as well as your specific interests ultimately targeting you with highly effective political advertisements that are riddled with chicanery on behalf of candidates you would otherwise not support.

A second political implication would be that if people are able to be educated regarding personality and recognize that we are all unique individuals, then we could perhaps lessen the hate between groups other than our own. In the United States for instance, the Democrats hate the Republicans and vice versa. What most Americans fail to realize, however, is that peoples' political affiliation is largely a consequence of their innate personality. The other side is not acting in a manner you find repulsive or annoying on purpose, it is simply that they perceive the world differently than you do. It is nobody's fault what their personality is, and while it is clear that people will never agree on everything, there needs to be a greater recognition of people's differences and perhaps more civil discourse can be conducted between groups as a result.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Big Five personality traits do influence political orientation, meaning that people's political support is largely based on their innate personality. As a result of personality's influence in determining political affiliation, many practical implications are made possible, such as fostering increased support for political campaigns through personalized advertisements, the ability to create better policy through recognizing group differences, and the possibility of having more civil dialogue with those whose personalities are different than our own. Regardless of the implications, though, it is important to treat each person as their own unique individual, all while maintaining the recognition of peoples' differences if we are to make policy that ultimately benefits everyone in society.

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