Not as Different as We Want to Be: Attitudinally Consistent Trait Desirability Leads to Exaggerated Associations Between Personality and Sociopolitical Attitudes

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Research connecting sociopolitical attitudes to personality typically relies exclusively on self-report measures of personality. A recently discovered mechanism of bias in self-reports highlights a particular challenge for this approach. Specifically, individuals tend to report exaggerated levels of a trait to the extent that they view that trait as desirable. In a community sample of 443 participants, differences in sociopolitical attitudes were associated with differences in the extent to which individuals provided biased self-reports for a given trait (relative to trait levels indicated by peer-report or an objective measure) as well as differences in views of the desirability that trait. Further, the tendency to misrepresent traits in a manner consistent with one’s sociopolitical attitudes was mediated by differences in views of trait desirability. Thus, although meaningful personality differences exist among those with differing sociopolitical attitudes, those differences may not be as large as people with opposing sociopolitical attitudes might like them to be.

KEY WORDS: Big Five personality, idiographically desirable responding, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Social Dominance Orientation, intelligence

A considerable body of work has stressed the importance of personality in the development of sociopolitical attitudes. Recent meta-analyses identify traits such as Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and intelligence as consistent correlates of certain dimensions of sociopolitical attitude differences (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008; Van Hiel, Onraet, & De Pauw, 2010). The present study investigated the possibility that the associations of personality traits with sociopolitical attitudes are often exaggerated because they reflect a tendency for self-ratings of personality to reflect not only who we are but who we want to be.

Personality and Sociopolitical Attitudes

Before delineating our rationale for this hypothesis, we note that the existence of some degree of exaggeration would not preclude the possibility that basic personality traits influence sociopolitical
attitudes. Indeed, given that most personality traits describe persistent patterns of emotion, cognition, motivation, and behavior, in response to broad classes of stimuli like reward, punishment, uncertainty, or cognitive complexity (Corr, DeYoung, & McNaughton, 2013), it would be surprising if they did not have effects on people’s sociopolitical attitudes. The study of these effects has been aided by the identification of two distinct sociopolitical attitude dimensions that appear to underlie most left-right differences (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). The first dimension concerns attitudes towards change, contrasting approval of change with a preference for traditionalism and order. This dimension is commonly assessed using Altemeyer’s (1988) Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scale. The second dimension concerns attitudes towards inequality, contrasting egalitarianism with antiegalitarianism, and is commonly assessed using the Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) scale (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). Although variations have been observed both across and within cultures in the relations of these constructs to each other and to positions on particular issues (Duriez, Van Hiel, & Kossowska, 2005), politically conservative individuals tend to score highly on both measures—that is, to be both more authoritarian and antiegalitarian. Nonetheless, although both of these dimensions appear consistently relevant to basic left-right political differences (Jost et al., 2009), the psychological distinctness of these two dimensions should not be overlooked. The differences in their respective associations with a range of characteristics, including personality, values, cognitive style and ability, and disgust sensitivity (reviewed in Ludeke & DeYoung, in press) highlight the importance of distinguishing between these two domains in psychological research.

A recent meta-analysis (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008) indicated that these two attitude dimensions exhibited relatively distinct associations with the Big Five personality traits. Although the conservative pole of both attitude dimensions is characterized by low levels of Openness, this association is considerably stronger for authoritarianism than for antiegalitarianism. Further, the modestly elevated levels of Conscientiousness observed among authoritarians is not characteristic of antiegalitarians, and the low Agreeableness of antiegalitarians is not characteristic of authoritarians. An additional area of difference concerns cognitive ability. Whereas a recent meta-analysis indicates that authoritarians are characterized by moderately lower levels of cognitive ability (Van Hiel, Onraet, & De Pauw, 2010), antiegalitarian views appear to be uncorrelated with cognitive ability (Heaven, Ciarrochi, & Leeson, 2011). These distinct patterns can be interpreted as an indication that authoritarianism is primarily characterized by a lack of interest in and ability to consider alternative points of view and a preference for order and structure, whereas antiegalitarian views are primarily characterized by low levels of compassion (Hirsh, DeYoung, Xu, & Peterson, 2010; Osborne, Wootton, & Sibley, in press).

The literature connecting sociopolitical attitudes to personality has in many respects become large and sophisticated, using both student and nonstudent samples in a range of cultures (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008) and employing both longitudinal designs (Sibley & Duckitt, 2010) and genetically informative methods (Verhulst, Hatemi, & Martin, 2010). Still, there are notable shortcomings in the existing literature. Of particular interest here, this research has proceeded nearly exclusively through self-report studies, though notable efforts to remedy this deficit have appeared recently (Carney, Jost, Gosling, & Potter, 2008; Cohrs, Kämpfe-Hargrave, & Riemann, 2012). Although the utility of self-report assessments of personality is well established (Roberts, Kuncel, Shiner, Caspi, & Goldberg 2007), concerns over the vulnerability of these assessments to distortion have been raised

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1 As discussed at greater length elsewhere (DeYoung, 2011), we consider intelligence to be part of personality and refer to it as such throughout this article. However, the methods and conclusions of the present work do not in any way hinge on this conceptualization: whether intelligence is part of personality or is simply similar to personality traits in being a stable individual difference variable that predicts sociopolitical attitudes, its role in the present analysis is the same.
for over half a century (Edwards, 1953). Several studies have reported significant correlations between sociopolitical attitude constructs and the tendency to provide socially desirable self-reports (e.g. Altemeyer, 1996; Meston, Heiman, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 1998). However, because measures of socially desirable responding (SDR) have themselves been shown to capture true personality variance as much or even more than the tendency to misrepresent one’s traits (McCrae & Costa, 1983; Ones, Viswesvaran, & Reiss, 1996), such results must be interpreted with caution: they may reflect real differences in personality, differences in the tendency to provide biased self-reports, or both.

A recently identified source of bias in self-report measures provides an additional reason to question the accuracy of the personality correlates of sociopolitical attitudes identified in self-report studies. This bias stems from the tendency of individuals to overclaim specifically those traits they personally view as desirable. Because individuals differ in the traits they view as most desirable, there are predictable differences in which traits an individual will overclaim (Ludeke, Weisberg, & DeYoung, 2013). This bias is labeled idiographically desirable responding (IDR) to contrast it with socially desirable responding (Paulhus, 2002), in which people tend to exaggerate the traits that society in general (rather than the specific individual) finds desirable. To illustrate IDR by example, someone who values Extraversion highly is likely to exaggerate his Extraversion in self-report to a greater extent than someone who does not value Extraversion.

Whereas assessment of SDR merely requires knowing what traits are generally desirable, assessment of IDR requires asking each participant about the desirability of each trait. Because IDR has been demonstrated in a sample where personality and trait desirability were not simultaneously assessed (Ludeke et al., 2013), the correlations between ratings of trait desirability and overclaiming do not appear to be induced by the assessment itself. Instead, IDR might be interpreted as an illustration of the more general tendency to feel that one has positive qualities (as illustrated by the “better than average effect”; Alicke & Govorun, 2005), consistent with the observation that the tendency appears more pronounced among those with higher levels of self-esteem (Ludeke et al., 2013). Importantly, IDR does not imply that the association between views of trait desirability and self-reported personality are exclusively based on fiction. In fact, ratings of trait desirability are correlated both with true trait levels and with overclaiming (Ludeke et al., 2013): the individual who rates Extraversion as highly desirable is thus likely to actually be relatively extraverted, though not as extraverted as he will claim to be.

Idiographically Desirable Responding: Implications for the Study of Attitudes and Personality

IDR is relevant to the association of personality characteristics with sociopolitical attitudes because of the well-documented association of sociopolitical attitudes with values, many of which pertain to personality-related characteristics such as politeness and curiosity (Feather, 2005). Whenever people with differing sociopolitical attitudes value such characteristics differently, IDR suggests that they are likely to show differing patterns of misrepresentation in self-reports of personality. For example, Self-Direction (which concerns Openness-related characteristics such as creativity and curiosity) tends to be valued highly by nonauthoritarians (Feather, 2005), which suggests that nonauthoritarians are likely to overclaim Openness. Thus, correlations between sociopolitical orientation and personality may be driven not only by real differences in personality, but also by the tendency of people with different sociopolitical orientations to exaggerate different traits.

It is important not to overstare the consequences of IDR, however. Although IDR indicates the likelihood of different patterns of misrepresentation among those with different attitudes, it does not suggest that the observed associations between sociopolitical attitudes and personality are complete fictions: as noted above, differences in views of trait desirability are associated not only with overclaiming, but also with true trait levels as indicated by peer-report and objective assessment. Additionally, previous research using peer reports and behavioral assessments of personality has
shown significant correlations between sociopolitical attitudes and personality (Carney et al., 2008; Cohrs et al., 2012). The potential of IDR is thus to provide a refinement, not a revolution, in the study of personality and sociopolitical attitudes: without denying some reality to the correlations between these domains, it indicates both that these correlations may be exaggerated in self-report studies and that this exaggeration will be significantly mediated by views of trait desirability.

Although the primary goal of the present work is to highlight a previously unconsidered challenge to the study of personality and sociopolitical attitudes, this study also provides a test of the usefulness and significance of IDR. We are not aware of any previous work demonstrating an association between sociopolitical attitudes and misrepresentation in personality. Although previous studies using SDR measures hinted at the possibility that authoritarians were more prone to overclaim “saint-like” traits such as Conscientiousness and Agreeableness (Altemeyer, 1996; Meston et al., 1998), the present report is the first study we are aware of to explore whether sociopolitical attitudes predict an actual discrepancy between self-reported personality and any criterion. If our hypotheses are supported, IDR will not only predict the existence of such discrepancies, but also will provide an explanation of those discrepancies, in that the associations between attitudes and misrepresentation in self-report are expected to be mediated by views of trait desirability.

The present study thus relies on a large community sample of adults to test the following hypotheses derived from IDR.

**H1**: Sociopolitical attitudes are associated with misrepresentation in personality assessments, as indicated by discrepancy between self-reported trait levels and trait levels indicated by peer report and objective data.

**H2**: This association between sociopolitical attitudes and misrepresentation will be partially mediated by self-ratings of trait desirability.

We focus on traits established by meta-analytic work (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008; Van Hiel et al., 2010) as related to the attitude dimensions captured by RWA and SDO: Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Openness, and intelligence.

**Method**

**Participants**

Participants were members of the Eugene-Springfield Community Sample, a predominantly middle-aged group ($M = 51$ years, $SD = 12.36$, range = 18–80) drawn from lists of homeowners in the Eugene-Springfield area of Oregon. Participants were predominantly (97%) Caucasian and reported a range of educational attainment, with a median of two years of postsecondary education. Surveys were completed by mail over 14 years in exchange for money, beginning in 1994. Not all participants in this study provided data for each assessment. We used all participants for whom data were available for self-reported personality, trait desirability, and three peer-reports of personality. After excluding two participants whose responses indicated obvious inattention (all 97 trait desirability ratings were marked as “neither desirable nor undesirable), 443 participants were included. For the analysis of intelligence, the 383 participants who completed all relevant measures were included. Because these data were collected by other researchers for other purposes (Goldberg, 2005), our study relies on the best available instruments available for this sample in order to address our research question.
Measures

Big Five. The Big Five personality traits were assessed in 1998 with the 44-item Big Five Inventory (BFI; John & Srivastava, 1999) and Saucier’s (1994) 40-item Mini-Markers (MM). Participants were instructed to provide additional copies designed for peer ratings to any three people who knew them “very well.” As described in greater detail by DeYoung (2006), these peer raters were predominantly friends, relatives, spouses, or coworkers. All instruments utilized 5-point Likert scales. Scores for Big Five personality for both self and peer reports were obtained by taking the means of all items for each trait from both the BFI and MM, yielding alphas between .84 and .94. We followed Ludeke et al. (2013) in using a subset of seven Openness items related to intelligence (e.g., “insightful,” “unintelligent”) to represent self-reported intelligence levels. As discussed in previous work on this sample (DeYoung, 2006), the average interrater correlations exhibited in this sample were highly comparable to that reported in meta-analyses on the topic (∼.35; Connelly & Ones, 2010).

Trait desirability. In 2001, participants were asked to rate “how desirable or undesirable you feel it is for others to be or act this way” for a list of 97 characteristics using a 9-point Likert scale, with responses translated into trait desirability measures for the Big Five based on Saucier and Goldberg’s (1996) analysis of which of these adjectives fell within each Big Five construct. The desirability of intelligence was assessed using a subset of Openness items identified by Ludeke et al. (2013). As described by Ludeke et al. (2013), scores were adjusted to remove the effect of response sets such as extreme responding (in which some people tend to use the extreme ends of the scale and others the middle responses). To the extent that such response sets are present, they indicate a possible alternative explanation for any association between raw trait desirability scores and other self-report measures of interest, namely that the associations reflect individual differences in how scales are used rather than, for example, the impact of trait desirability on overclaiming. To remove any such effects from desirability ratings, we created residuals for each of the Big Five, predicting each trait in turn with the remaining four. These residualized desirability ratings thus contained the desirability a given individual assigned to that Big Five trait after removing any variance shared with the desirability ratings of other Big Five traits, including any variance due to extreme responding. It was these residualized desirability ratings that were then used in the analyses. (Because ratings of intelligence were assessed with a subset of Openness items, only the four remaining Big Five traits were partialled from intelligence.) Supplementary analyses using raw (unpartialled) desirability ratings yielded substantively the same pattern of associations that is reported below.

Intelligence. In 1996, 383 participants completed Cattell’s 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF; Conn & Rieke, 1994). The scale of this instrument that Cattell labeled “Factor B” is a 15-item intelligence test consisting of knowledge and reasoning problems with objectively correct answers in a multiple-choice format. Previous research has shown that scores correlate well with Full Scale IQ from the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale—Revised, \( r = .57 \) (Abel & Brown, 1998).

Social attitudes. In 2001, participants completed a 14-item version of Altemeyer’s (1988) RWA scale and a 10-item version of Pratto et al.’s (1994) SDO scale. Both scales were counterbalanced with positive and negative items, with responses provided on a 9-point Likert scale ranging from “very strongly disagree” to “very strongly agree.” RWA assesses a preference for convention, submission to established authorities, and willingness to punish social deviants, as exemplified by the item “Our country will be great if we honor the ways of our forefathers, do what the authorities tell us to do, and get rid of the ‘rotten apples’ who are ruining everything.” SDO assesses an individual’s willingness to accept group-based inequality and is assessed with items like “It’s OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others.” Alpha reliabilities for RWA and SDO were .91 and .80, respectively.
Previous work on identifying social and idiographic influences on overclaiming has relied on self-criterion residuals (SCRs) to indicate bias in self-reports (Paulhus & John, 1998; Ludeke et al., 2013). SCRs are obtained by regressing the self-report scores for a given trait on the criterion scores for that trait, with the standardized residuals saved as a new variable. This procedure removes the variance in self-reports that is shared with the criterion, leaving in the residual any tendency to represent trait levels as higher or lower than what would be predicted based on the criterion. Although SCRs are an imperfect measure of bias (as discussed further below, they will fail to capture any inaccuracies in self-report ratings that are shared with the criterion), they are currently the best available and most commonly utilized technique for assessing bias in self-reports. In the present study, we used peer-reported trait levels as criteria for Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness and performance on Cattell’s Factor B as the criterion for intelligence. To illustrate the interpretation of SCRs, if an individual has a large, positive SCR for Openness, that means he or she self-reported higher levels of the trait than would be predicted based on their peer reports. SCRs were obtained in this manner for each participant for each trait for use in the analyses presented in Table 1.

To test our hypothesis that sociopolitical attitudes predict SCRs because differences in attitudes are associated with differences in views of trait desirability, we employed latent variable modeling as shown in Figure 1. For Openness, Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness, each peer report served as a criterion. For intelligence, we created three indicators, each comprising five Factor B items, by summing scores for every third item. By using three indicators from Factor B, we insured the latent variable for intelligence adequately reflected variance in performance on the intelligence measure. The three variables on the right of the figure constitute a standard mediation analysis, and the inclusion of the latent variable allowed us to separate variance due to bias from true trait variance. True trait variance is indicated by the agreement among peer and self-ratings and is likely to affect all variables in the model, including trait desirability, due to the fact that people tend to value traits

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<th>Table 1. Correlations of Sociopolitical Attitudes with Personality, Self-Criterion Residuals, and Trait Desirability Ratings</th>
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Note. Values in bold are significant at $p < .05$ (without adjustment for multiple testing). A = Agreeableness, C = Conscientiousness, O = Openness, IQ = Intelligence.
that they actually possess (Ludeke et al., 2013). Because most of the variance in self-reports that is due to true trait levels (i.e., that is shared with the other indicators of the trait) is accounted for by the path from the latent True Trait variable to Self, the variance in Self not accounted for by the path from the latent True Trait variable is roughly equivalent to the SCRs described above. (However, because the model additionally incorporates Sociopolitical Attitudes and Trait Desirability, which are predicted by True Trait Levels, the variance remaining in Self in this model will not be exactly identical to that remaining in the SCRs). Thus, any paths leading to Self in this model (except the path from True Trait) are analogous to correlations between their originating variables and SCRs. Finally, the number in parentheses is the value for this path when the mediator, Trait Desirability, was not included in the model.

Figure 1. Mediation model to identify the influence of sociopolitical attitudes on overclaiming, by controlling for true trait variance. Parameter values shown are from the application of the model to Openness and Right-Wing Authoritarianism; for significance tests and parameters from other analyses, see Table 2. The value in parentheses represents the path coefficient in the reduced model, which omits Trait Desirability. Self = Self-reported personality.

Results

Table 1 shows correlations between the constructs of interest. Matching the results of previous meta-analyses, in self-reports, authoritarians were high in Conscientiousness but low in Openness and intelligence, and antiegalitarians were low in Agreeableness and Openness (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008; Van Hiel et al., 2010). Very similar results were observed for peer reports and objective performance, although RWA was not significantly correlated with peer-reported Conscientiousness.

We observed comparable associations between sociopolitical attitudes and personality as indicated by self and peer report as well as by objective performance, indicating some degree of validity for associations between personality and sociopolitical attitudes. Nonetheless, we also found evidence supporting our first hypothesis that these associations were overstated in self-reports. The correlations with SCRs in Table 1 indicate that RWA was associated with overclaiming Conscientiousness but underclaiming Openness and intelligence. SDO predicted underclaiming Agreeableness. Results from Table 1 also supported further investigation of our second hypothesis, as sociopolitical orientation predicted trait desirability for those traits where sociopolitical views predicted misrepresentation. Specifically, authoritarians tended to view Conscientiousness as particularly desirable while placing little value on Openness and intelligence. Antiegalitarians tended to place a low value on Agreeableness, with more modest associations observed between SDO and views of the desirability of Openness, intelligence, and Conscientiousness.

Our second hypothesis was formally tested using the mediation model shown in Figure 1. For each instance in which a sociopolitical attitude predicted misrepresentation of a trait, we tested whether the effect was mediated by differences in perceived trait desirability. Table 2 presents
standardized path coefficients and fit indices from these models. RMSEA and CFI values indicated the model fit well in all cases. Mediation was tested using the bootstrap method (Shrout & Bolger, 2002), which showed that Trait Desirability mediated the effect of Sociopolitical Attitudes on Self for all cases at \( p < .05 \). That is, the association between sociopolitical attitudes and misrepresentation on certain traits could be explained by their associations with perceptions of the value of those traits. Sociopolitical attitudes had no significant direct effect on self-ratings after accounting for their association with desirability, except in the case of RWA and intelligence, for which mediation was only partial.

Finally, in addition to predicting bias, sociopolitical attitudes were also associated with true differences in personality, as indicated by significant paths from the latent True Trait to Sociopolitical Attitudes in every model except for the one including Conscientiousness and RWA.

Discussion

A large and growing research literature highlights the connections between self-reported personality measures and sociopolitical attitudes, with recent work looking to these connections to explain changes in attitudes over time (Sibley & Duckitt, 2010) and even exploring common genetic roots between personality and attitudes (Verhulst et al., 2010). Our results suggested that the connection between personality and sociopolitical attitudes can contain elements of both truth and fiction. Consistent with previous work showing that attitudes were correlated with peer-reported personality (Cohrs et al., 2012), our model found attitudes exhibited connections to true latent trait levels; at the same time, however, attitudes were also associated with the tendency to over- or underclaim many of these traits. Mediation analysis showed that these associations between sociopolitical attitudes and exaggeration of personality traits could be explained by differences in perceptions of trait desirability that were associated with sociopolitical attitudes. This indicates that these attitudes led to distortions in self-rated personality traits because they were associated with perceptions of the desirability of those personality traits.

These results suggest that people with differing views on social and political issues may not be as different in personality as previously thought—or as different as some of those with opposing views might like to believe. For example, the elevated Conscientiousness that is taken to characterize authoritarians (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008) appeared only in self-report in our study, with the high value authoritarians ascribe to Conscientiousness apparently inspiring them to overclaim the trait. Similarly, those low in SDO (egalitarians) overclaimed their Agreeableness apparently as a result of the high value they placed on the trait, and nonauthoritarians did the same for Openness. Importantly, this pattern of results was also detected in a trait for which an objective assessment was performed.

### Table 2. Standardized Path Weights and Fit Indices from the Model in Figure 1

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Note. In the models containing C, O, and A, criterion values are provided by peer reports. In the model containing IQ, criterion values are provided by five item clusters from Factor B. The value in parentheses represents the path coefficient in the reduced model, which omits Trait Desirability. S.A. = Sociopolitical Attitudes, Des = Trait Desirability, Crit. = Criterion, True = True Trait Levels, Self = Self-reported personality, A = Agreeableness, C = Conscientiousness, O = Openness, IQ = Intelligence. *\( p < .05 \), **\( p < .01 \).
(i.e., intelligence), thereby reducing any concern that our results are merely artifacts of inaccurate peer ratings. Nonauthoritarians tended to claim higher levels of intelligence than predicted by their objective performance on an intelligence test, and this effect was mediated by the high value that nonauthoritarians placed on intelligence. Although research has established that self-reports of trait levels can contain some true trait variance not shared with peer reports (e.g., Vazire, 2010), previous work on IDR has indicated that inaccuracies in peer reports are not sufficient to account for the associations between ratings of trait desirability and overclaiming because the associations remain present even when an objective measure is used as a criterion (Ludeke et al., 2013). The robustness of the present model is indicated by our results showing that trait desirability mediated the impact of sociopolitical attitudes on overclaiming regardless of whether an objective measure or peer reports were used as criteria.

In fact, use of peer ratings as criteria may even lead to underestimation of the amount of distortion associated with sociopolitical attitudes, and future research may benefit from using additional objective measures. As noted above, peers in this sample were predominantly close friends, family members, and romantic partners and on average liked their targets very much (DeYoung, 2006). The deep familiarity such peers have with the target’s behaviors, thoughts, and feelings means that they often have valuable knowledge concerning the target’s personality (Vazire, 2010). However, such peers also tend to have (1) positive views of each other and (2) similar ideas of what qualities are desirable (Murray, Holmes, Bellavia, Griffin, & Dolderman, 2002; Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988). To the extent that peers are unable or unwilling to provide unbiased ratings of targets, the use of such peers as criteria may thus obscure the misrepresentation contained within the target’s self-report. Peers will rate the target as having the characteristics the peer sees as desirable, and, because their views of desirable characteristics are similar to those of the target’s views, the target’s tendency to overclaim desirable traits will be underdetected. For example, the peer ratings of a target who scores low on SDO may indicate that the target is more Agreeable than the target actually is. Because this misrepresentation parallels that provided by the target in self-reports, it will result in attenuated estimates of the extent to which SDO predicts misrepresentation on self-reports of Agreeableness.

Taken to the extreme, these considerations might suggest that peer reports of trait levels are insufficient to demonstrate the reality of personality differences between those with different sociopolitical attitudes. However, previous studies using objective assessments of personality have reported differences between liberals and conservatives (Carney et al., 2008; Van Hiel et al., 2010), and our finding of a negative correlation between RWA and objectively assessed cognitive ability is consistent with those prior findings. Thus, we do not take the reality of personality differences between those with different sociopolitical attitudes to be in doubt. Rather, we claim that biased self-reports lead to exaggeration of these differences in our sample and that future research should examine whether the magnitude of this exaggeration is less effectively demonstrated by peer reports than by objective measures.

The present results additionally highlight just how far apart those with different sociopolitical views are when it comes to the traits they view as desirable. Future work may explore the various effects these differences might have on the political process, including candidate selection. For example, whereas left- and right-wing voters tend to differ modestly in IQ and Openness (Jost et al., 2003), recent Democratic presidents have been markedly higher on these traits than recent Republican presidents (Simonton, 2006), perhaps reflecting the high value placed on these traits by the left. Similarly, while center-right voters in Italy tend to score modestly higher than center-left voters on Conscientiousness, this gap appears more pronounced among Italian political leaders (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Consiglio, Picconi, & Zimbardo, 2003; Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Zimbardo, 1999).

More generally, our results provide a concrete demonstration of the need for caution in interpreting any reported connections between self-reports of personality and variables, like sociopolitical
attitudes, that may reflect the values of individuals. Differences in the values placed on different traits have the power to bias self-reports of personality such that they show an exaggerated association with other value-related constructs. Future research looking to connect personality to value-laden constructs would benefit from the use of alternative measures of personality such as peer reports (Connelly & Ones, 2010) and objective measures like intelligence tests. Even individual differences in characteristics such as educational attainment may be associated with value differences, possibly distorting their apparent connection to personality when self-reports are used (Ludeke, 2014).

In conclusion, we found support for a model in which systematic differences in the traits that are desired by individuals with different sociopolitical attitudes led those with different attitudes to claim to be more different from each other than they actually were. This result illustrates both the importance of studying views of trait desirability and a serious drawback to the near-exclusive reliance on self-reported data for studies connecting personality with value-based constructs.

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