

Political/Social Attitudes and Their Personality Correlates

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Given rising political polarization, this study was designed to examine left-wing and right-wing authoritarianism and their relationships with personality traits. Traditional perspectives typically have linked authoritarianism with right-wing ideologies, but recent scholarship has recognized that authoritarianism is evident across the political spectrum. From a sample of university students and community members, this correlational study required participants to complete measures of conservatism, the Big Five personality traits, the Dark Triad traits, and right and left-wing authoritarianism in order to determine the key factors predicting authoritarian tendencies. Analyses indicated that both right-wing and left-wing authoritarianism were predicted by the conservatism, age, and employment status of participants. Furthermore, greater reported conscientiousness, lower reported openness, and greater reported conservatism predicted right-wing authoritarianism, whereas left-wing authoritarianism always was predicted by lower conservatism. In contrast to expectations, agreeableness and conscientiousness did not predict conservatism. Additionally, the lack of correlation between a participant's need for cognitive closure, elements of the dark triad, and their expression of authoritarianism was observed. Another interesting observation in this study revolves around the lack of context or group process involved in participant's expression of authoritarianism. These findings raise interesting questions about the contemporary understanding of authoritarianism's need for context and intergroup processes to manifest fully. As a whole, these observations paint a nuanced picture of the personality profile of authoritarians and the contextual intricacies at play in the expression of left or right-wing authoritarianism in rural Manitoba.