



The Relationship Between Political Ideology, Personality, Science-Religion Compatibility, and Theistic Intellectual Humility

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Abstract

Approximately 200 individuals participated in this study to explore the relationship between political ideology, personality, the compatibility of religion and science, and theistic intellectual humility. Political ideology (conservatism versus liberalism) was correlated with the Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10), Science-Religion Compatibility Scale (SRCS), and the Theistic Intellectual Humility Scale (THIS). The BFI-10 measures the big five personality traits. The SRCS measures whether science and religion are seen at odds with each other or compatible, and the TIHS measures intellectual humility as expressed by theists. This study is important in that individuals do not always view scientific findings, religious beliefs, and political ideology as compatible, which can result in people staying within their own ideological groups rather than engaging in dialogue about matters of science and faith. The results of this study suggest ways that mutual understanding may be fostered among groups that have disparate views about politics, religion, and scientific findings.

Literature Review & Summary of Measures

Science Religion Compatibility Scale (SRCS) (Leicht, Sharp, Labouff, & Elsdon-Baker, 2020): The SRCS measures perceived levels of conflict/compatibility between science and religion, as well as the dependence on the perception of the participant’s religious experiences. The index is a composite of 11 items related to the issue of science-religion compatibility, each using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Complete conflict to 7 = Complete compatibility). There are two SRCS subscales: (1) Explanations – trying to explain the origins or structure of life in the universe and (2) Human-World Interactions – trying to explain human behavior towards each other and the world around us. Respondents are asked "to what extent [they] personally see science and religion as in conflict or as compatible" on issues such as "explaining the origins of human life," and "treating mental illness."

Theistic Intellectual Humility Scale (TIHS) (Hill, Hall, Wang, & Decker, 2019): The TIHS measures the positive acknowledgment of one's intellectual shortcomings as it pertains to one's religious beliefs on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree). The TIHS contains 11 items and is divided into three subscales: intellectual submission to the divine (example item: "I try to submit all my intellectual efforts to God."), human finite limitations (example item: "I don't need to know everything because God is in control."), and belief bias and limitations (example item: "When I approach a passage in the Bible, I am aware that I have my own biases.").

Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10) (Rammstedt & John, 2007): The BFI-10 using 10 items briefly measures the following five personality dimensions on a continuum: neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience. It was developed from the BFI-44 with two questions per personality dimension in order to provide a useful personality measure when under time constraints. Items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Disagree Strongly to 5=Agree Strongly).



Sample Characteristics

n = 213
Age = 27.15
Age range = 18-76
Male = 40%
Female = 58%

Mean Political Conservatism = 3.78
Political Conservatism Range = 0-7
(Higher scores indicate more politically conservative views)

BFI-10 Openness Mean = 3.59
TIHS: Intellectual Submission to the Divine Mean = 4.21
TIHS: Human Finite Limitations Mean = 4.82
TIHS: Belief Bias and Limitations Mean = 4.82
SRCS Mean = 4.31

Results and Discussion

Correlations		
		POLITICAL CONSERVATISM
BFI-10-OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE	Pearson Correlation	-0.156**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.034
* Significant at the 0.05 level **Significant at the 0.01 level		

Hypothesis 1: BFI-10 - Openness to Experience will be negatively correlated with political conservatism.

According to the data, the BFI –10 – Openness to Experience is significantly negatively correlated with political conservatism, which supports the hypothesis. Those who politically identify as conservative are less likely to be open to experience. This was expected and supports our hypothesis, as well as other research. Contentment with tradition and advocating for the status quo are defining features of political conservatism (Osborne, Dufresne, Eady, Lees-Marshment, & van der Linden, 2017). This could explain why openness is negatively correlated with political conservatism.

Correlations		
		POLITICAL CONSERVATISM
PERCEIVED CONFLICT BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION	Pearson Correlation	0.121
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.099
* Significant at the 0.05 level **Significant at the 0.01 level		

Hypothesis 2: SRCS – Perceived conflict between science and religion will be positively correlated with political conservatism.

The hypothesis was conceived due to the perceived resistance to science and increased acceptance of religious ideas in politically conservative individuals (Leicht, Sharp, Labouff, & Elsdon-Baker, 2020). However, the data suggests that there is no significant relationship between political conservatism and a perceived conflict between science and religion. Barring sampling bias, this can be explained either by simply a lack of relationship between the two in the population, or the curve of the relationship could be nonlinear. It is conceivable that at the extreme ends of political ideology, individuals are more likely to perceive conflict between science and religion. In this case, a linear relationship between these two measures would not be appropriate.

Correlations		
		POLITICAL CONSERVATISM
THEISTIC HUMILITY – INTELLECTUAL SUBMISSION TO THE DIVINE	Pearson Correlation	0.227**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002.
* Significant at the 0.05 level **Significant at the 0.01 level		

Hypothesis 3: Theistic Humility (Intellectual Submission to the Divine) will be positively correlated with political conservatism

This hypothesis was supported, though the correlation is weak, which was expected given the nature of the items within the Intellectual Submission to the Divine subscale. This subscale consists of four items, a notable item being “I try to submit all my intellectual efforts to God.” Based on Haidt’s (2012) research, political conservatives tend to emphasize the importance of obedience to authority. For the theist, one’s intellect, which is viewed as a gift from God, and the accomplishments that go with it are all under the authority of God. In other words, all knowledge is God’s knowledge, even knowledge derived from a person’s own intellectual abilities.

Correlations		
		POLITICAL CONSERVATISM
Theistic Humility (Human Finite Limitation)	Pearson Correlation	0.225**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
* Significant at the 0.05 level **Significant at the 0.01 level		

Hypothesis 4: Theistic Humility (Human Finite Limitation) will be positively correlated with political conservatism

The hypothesis was supported, the data showing Human Finite Limitation is positively correlated to political conservatism. Other research shows that political conservatives tend to be more religious than those who are more politically liberal (Haidt, 20-). Those who are more religious are more likely to accept the limit of one’s knowledge and abilities because of the belief in God’s control over all aspects of life (Davis, 2018). Those who scored high on political conservatism are more willing to accept their intellectual limitations and rely on God's knowledge and power.

Correlations		
		POLITICAL CONSERVATISM
Theistic Humility (Belief Bias and Limitations)	Pearson Correlation	0.142
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.054
* Significant at the 0.05 level **Significant at the 0.01 level		

Hypothesis 5: Theistic Humility (Belief Bias and Limitations) will be negatively correlated with political conservatism.

The hypothesis was conceived due to the positive correlation between those who identify as politically conservative and religious orthodoxy (Grover, Tidwell, & Rozeboom, 2019). However, the data shows no correlation between Belief Bias and Limitations and political conservatism. A possible explanation could be that the sample might not properly represent the entire population.

Conclusion and Future Research

As expected, personality as it relates to openness to experience and aspects of theistic humility correlated with political conservatism. However, it is also worth noting that views of perceived conflict between science and religion (as measured by the SRCS) and awareness of belief biases and limitations (as measured by the TIHS) are not significantly related to political conservatism. If experimental research designs are used in the future it could demonstrate causality, which will assist in predicting human behavior as it relates to politics. For example, an experiment could be conducted in which participants take the SRCS, and then read an article about science written by an atheist and an article on the same topic written by a conservative Christian. Then, the participants would take the SRCS again to see if the readings had an effect on the SRCS scores. Regarding theistic humility, participants could take the TIHS, and then read an article about theology by a progressive Christian and a conservative Christian on the same theological topics. Then, participants would take the TIHS again to see if readings affected the TIHS scores. The Results of this study suggest that the awareness of biases as it relates to the Bible and the perception of a divide between science and religion do not manifest as characteristics typical of any level of political conservatism. In the future it may be useful to correlate these various measures with each other to create a fuller picture of the characteristics of theists.

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