

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14095-9 - Personality and the Foundations of Political Behaviour

Jeffery J. Mondak

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PERSONALITY AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

Personality and the Foundations of Political Behavior is the first study in more than thirty years to investigate the broad significance of personality traits for mass political behavior. Drawing on the Big Five personality trait framework, Jeffery J. Mondak argues that attention to personality provides a valuable means to integrate biological and environmental influences via rich, nuanced theories and empirical tests of the antecedents of political behavior. Development of such holistic accounts is critical, Mondak contends, if inquiry is to move beyond simple “blank slate” environmental depictions of political engagement. Analyses examining multiple facets of political information, political attitudes, and participation reveal that the Big Five trait dimensions – openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability – produce both direct and indirect effects on a wide range of political phenomena.

Jeffery J. Mondak is James M. Benson Chair in Public Issues and Civic Leadership in the Department of Political Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is the author of *Nothing to Read: Newspapers and Elections in a Social Experiment* (1995) and coeditor of *Fault Lines: Why the Republicans Lost Congress* (2009). Professor Mondak’s articles appear in outlets including the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, the *British Journal of Political Science*, *Cognitive Brain Research*, the *Journal of Politics*, and *Public Opinion Quarterly*. He has received awards for his research from the American Association for Public Opinion Research, the American Political Science Association, and the Midwest Political Science Association.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14095-9 - Personality and the Foundations of Political Behaviour

Jeffery J. Mondak

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN PUBLIC OPINION
AND POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

SERIES EDITORS

Dennis Chong, *Northwestern University*

James H. Kuklinski, *University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*

Cambridge Studies in Public Opinion and Political Psychology publishes innovative research from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives on the mass public foundations of politics and society. Research in the series focuses on the origins and influence of mass opinion; the dynamics of information and deliberation; and the emotional, normative, and instrumental bases of political choice. In addition to examining psychological processes, the series explores the organization of groups, the association between individual and collective preferences, and the impact of institutions on beliefs and behavior.

Cambridge Studies in Public Opinion and Political Psychology is dedicated to furthering theoretical and empirical research on the relationship between the political system and the attitudes and actions of citizens.

Books in the Series

Asher Arian, *Security Threatened: Surveying Israeli Opinion on Peace and War*

James DeNardo, *The Amateur Strategist: Intuitive Deterrence Theories and the Politics of the Nuclear Arms Race*

Robert S. Erikson, Michael B. Mackuen, and James A. Stimson, *The Macro Polity*

James L. Gibson and Amanda Gouws, *Overcoming Intolerance in South Africa: Experiments in Democratic Persuasion*

John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Congress as Public Enemy: Public Attitudes toward American Political Institutions*

John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Stealth Democracy: Americans' Beliefs about How Government Should Work*

Continued following index

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14095-9 - Personality and the Foundations of Political Behaviour

Jeffery J. Mondak

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PERSONALITY AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

JEFFERY J. MONDAK

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14095-9 - Personality and the Foundations of Political Behaviour

Jeffery J. Mondak

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521140959

© Jeffery J. Mondak 2010

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2010

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Mondak, Jeffery J., 1962–

Personality and the foundations of political behavior / Jeffery J. Mondak.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in public opinion and political psychology)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-19293-4 (hardback)

1. Political psychology. 2. Personality. I. Title. II. Series.

JA74.5.M64 2010

320.01'9-dc22 2010011782

ISBN 978-0-521-19293-4 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-14095-9 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in
this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is,
or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14095-9 - Personality and the Foundations of Political Behaviour

Jeffery J. Mondak

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>List of Tables</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
1 Personality and Politics	I
2 The Big Five Approach	24
3 Measuring the Big Five	66
4 Personality and Political Information	92
5 Personality, Attitudes, and Political Predispositions	122
6 Personality and Political Participation	150
7 The Multiple Bases of Political Behavior	182
<i>References</i>	197
<i>Index</i>	219

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14095-9 - Personality and the Foundations of Political Behaviour

Jeffery J. Mondak

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Figures

3.1 Levels of Skew in the Distributions of Trait Measures: Original and Recoded Conscientiousness and Agreeableness Scales	<i>page 73</i>
4.1 Personality, Self-Ratings, and Interviewer Assessments of Respondents	107
4.2 Possible Interrelationships between Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness as Determinants of Political Knowledge	112
4.3 The Combinational Influence of Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness as Determinants of Political Knowledge	114
4.4 Personality and the Conditional Impact of Network Size on Exposure to Disagreement	118
5.1 Direct and Indirect Effects of Personality on Attitudes toward Abortion	139
5.2 The Conditional Impact of Extraversion on Discussion versus Action in Congress	143
5.3 The Nonmonotonic Effect of Conscientiousness on Preference for Compromise in Congress	145
6.1 Conscientiousness, External Efficacy, and Political Participation	168
6.2 Personality and the Impact of Campaign Tone on Projected Voter Turnout	175

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14095-9 - Personality and the Foundations of Political Behaviour

Jeffery J. Mondak

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Tables

3.1 Indicators of the Big Five Factors	<i>page</i> 76
3.2 Evidence Regarding the Quality of Two-Item Indicators of the Big Five	79
3.3 Relationships between the Big Five Trait Dimensions and Demographics	82
3.4 Nonresponse Levels on Personality Items and on Measures of Political Attitudes and Demographics	85
3.5 The Accessibility of Self-Reported Trait Judgments: A Comparison of Response Latencies	89
4.1 Media Use	97
4.2 Political Discussion	100
4.3 Political Attentiveness, Knowledge, and Opinionation	102
4.4 Interviewer Ratings of Respondents on Political Information	109
Appendix 4.A Ordered Logistic Regression Models, Openness, Conscientiousness, and Political Knowledge	120
Appendix 4.B Binomial Logistic Regression Models, Network Size, and Exposure to Disagreement	121
5.1 Personality and Political Efficacy	125
5.2 Personality and Political Ideology	129
5.3 Personality and Partisanship	133
5.4 Personality, Moral Traditionalism, and Moral Judgment	136
5.5 Direct and Indirect Effects of Personality on Policy Attitudes	138
Appendix 5.A Logistic Regression Models, Citizens' Attitudes toward Political Processes	149

List of Tables

6.1	Contacts with Elected Officials	155
6.2	Active/Social Participation in Political Campaigns	158
6.3	Passive/Individualistic Participation in Political Campaigns	160
6.4	Voter Turnout	163
Appendix 6.A	Conscientiousness, External Efficacy, and Political Participation	178
Appendix 6.B	Campaign Tone, Personality, and Voter Turnout	180

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14095-9 - Personality and the Foundations of Political Behaviour

Jeffery J. Mondak

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgments

This book outlines the case for the use of a particular model of personality trait structure, the “Big Five” approach, in research on political behavior. I began thinking about the possible importance of personality for mass politics in 1997, only a few years after psychologists published the first key works on the Big Five. I started gathering data a year later. In the more than a decade since, a great many people have provided numerous forms of assistance. Included are those who have helped in some manner with data acquisition, who have offered feedback on my papers and on this book, and who have joined me as coauthors on related conference papers and journal articles.

Most of the data examined in this study are from original surveys fielded in 1998, 2005, and 2006. The 1998 and 2005 surveys were administered while I was on the faculty at Florida State University. These projects received financial support from the LeRoy Collins Fund and from a Florida State University Developing Scholar Award. Funding for the 2006 survey was provided by the Center on Congress, the Center on American Politics, and the Office of the Vice Provost for Research at Indiana University; the Cline Center for Democracy, directed by Peter Nardulli, at the University of Illinois; the James M. Benson Fund at the University of Illinois; and by the following individuals: Ted Carmines, John Hibbing, Bob Huckfeldt, Gary Jacobson, Walt Stone, and Herb Weisberg. Additional data consulted for this project are from a survey conducted by Mary Anderson as part of her doctoral research at Florida State University, and from a survey directed by Carl McCurley in the state of Washington.

Three individuals who have provided me with a tremendous amount of support, feedback, and encouragement on this project warrant special mention. All are or have been graduate students who have worked with me. One of the genuine joys of this profession is having the opportunity

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14095-9 - Personality and the Foundations of Political Behaviour

Jeffery J. Mondak

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Acknowledgments*

to learn, and to draw energy, from bright and creative students. I have been especially fortunate in this regard. In 2003, Karen Halperin entered graduate school at Florida State like a tornado. For me, the personality project was a low priority at that time, as my focus was mostly on some other studies I had in the works. But Karen forced personality to the fore, where it has remained ever since. Karen coauthored my earliest personality papers, and she offered tremendous insight on countless facets of the study of personality and politics (including, notably, the limits of self-report data for one of the Big Five trait dimensions). Dona-Gene Mitchell always has been my most diligent and discerning sounding board on this project. Dona-Gene, now on the faculty at the University of Nebraska, was a graduate student first at Florida State and then at the University of Illinois. Because of this, she was able to monitor this project from its fledgling state, and she has offered extraordinarily useful comments and critiques. In 2008, Dona-Gene took breaks from work on her award-winning doctoral dissertation to provide detailed feedback on the first drafts of this book's seven chapters. Matt Hibbing entered graduate school at the University of Illinois in 2006, and I have thought of him more as a peer than as a student from day one. Since his arrival at Illinois, Matt and I have coauthored several personality papers, and he has spent countless hours with me devising hypotheses, designing instruments, and analyzing data. I have learned a tremendous amount from him along the way.

It is hard to imagine a more stimulating or collegial environment for the study of political behavior than that at the University of Illinois. In addition to Dona-Gene and Matt, several other graduate students have given me helpful feedback on this project, including Jason Coronel, Matt Hayes, Buddy Peyton, and Sergio Wals. Special thanks are owed to Andy Bloeser, who read one of the final drafts of this book, and who did so with a much-appreciated eye for nuance and detail. Andy also has joined me as a coauthor on some papers on personality that were started as follow-ups to this book. As to my colleagues, I have had countless conversations with many of them on various aspects of this study, and several also have provided feedback on some of this book's chapters and on my other personality papers. For their assistance, and especially for what they contribute to the intellectual environment at Illinois, I thank Scott Althaus, Ira Carmen, Brian Gaines, Jude Hays, Pete Nardulli, and Tom Rudolph. Lastly, Jim Kuklinski is simply the best colleague and friend one could ever wish for, and I could not possibly express or quantify how much I have gained from knowing Jim.

Several people from outside of the University of Illinois also have provided quite helpful feedback on this project. The list includes three anonymous reviewers who read this manuscript for Cambridge University

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14095-9 - Personality and the Foundations of Political Behaviour

Jeffery J. Mondak

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Acknowledgments*

Press, numerous additional reviewers who have commented on related journal pieces I have coauthored, and Lewis Goldberg, John Hibbing, Bob Huckfeldt, Robert McCrae, Dennis Organ, Paul Quirk, Harald Schoen, Mitch Seligson, and John Zaller. I also greatly appreciate the encouragement and efficiency shown by Eric Crahan and Lew Bateman of Cambridge.

It is important to stay grounded. I am especially fortunate in this regard, in part because my interrelated hobbies surround me with some of the most creative and entertaining people anywhere. My thanks to Sergio Wals, Alex Stangl, and everyone at Songramp; to Dr. Demento and everyone else who has played my songs; to Christine Lavin for writing with me; to Bruce Lansky and his team at Meadowbrook; and to the thousands of elementary school students who have welcomed my performances, and who often have drowned me out with shouts of “and pizza’s on the way!”

My family also performs heroic duty in keeping me grounded and, in the case of my sons, in keeping me exhausted. Nothing I have accomplished would have been possible without my parents’ support. My wife Damarys does triple duty as wife, colleague, and coauthor. She enriches every facet of my life and, thankfully, forces me to relax each year at the beach. Our sons Ryan and Christopher are incredibly adept at keeping Damarys and me from working (Christopher phoned me twice during this paragraph alone). And good for them for being so, because baseball games, soccer matches, piano lessons, essay competitions, and the rest should be, and are, what life is about. Lastly, although they will not know they’ve been mentioned here, I’ve learned vital lessons about the biological bases of personality – and about the virtues of a nice walk – from Pelado and his departed brethren, Pippin and Atticus.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14095-9 - Personality and the Foundations of Political Behaviour

Jeffery J. Mondak

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PERSONALITY AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF
POLITICAL BEHAVIOR