
Personalizing Politics

A Congruency Model of Political Preference

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Modern politics become personalized as individual characteristics of voters and candidates assume greater importance in political discourse. Although personalities of candidates capture center stage and become the focus of voters' preferences, individual characteristics of voters, such as their traits and values, become decisive for political choice. The authors' findings reveal that people vote for candidates whose personality traits are in accordance with the ideology of their preferred political party. They also select politicians whose traits match their own traits. Moreover, voters' traits match their own values. The authors outline a congruency model of political preference that highlights the interacting congruencies among voters' self-reported traits and values, voters' perceptions of leaders' personalities, politicians' self-reported traits, and programs of favored political coalitions.

Politics in many democracies of the Western world is becoming personalized for at least two basic reasons. First, political choices are more individualized, as they depend increasingly on voters' likes and dislikes and on judgmental heuristics that guide political decisions more so than on previously identified categorical variables such as education, gender, and age. Second, candidates have become more concerned with conveying favorable personal images and appealing narratives that please potential voters than with staunchly promoting a political ideology to voters. Among the factors contributing to this personalization process are the following: higher education levels of the electorate and their broader access to continuously available information; the decline of the number and diversity of political parties; the similarity of programs advocated by opposing parties as they move from diverse ideological positions to more pragmatic platforms in order to attract moderate followings, and the complexity of political issues as they encompass domestic, international, and global short-term and long-term goals. In addition, modern media, largely television, have become personalizing vehicles that bring candidate images into voters' homes at all hours of the day and night while augmenting the mass of information those voters must process.

Ideology continues to remain important (Bobbio, 1995; W. E. Miller & Shanks, 1996), but ideological divisions are less marked than in the past (Giddens, 1998; Ricolfi, 2002). As opposing political parties and coalitions

move toward more centrist positions that are hardly distinctive, personal characteristics of both voters and candidates gain salience. And as the power of situational factors associated with different life conditions of voters recedes to the background, citizens anchor their political preferences to their personal experiences. Doing so gives greater weight in orienting their political judgments to both their own personalities and the personalities of their leaders.

Changing Conceptions of the Determinants of Voting

These contemporary changes can be viewed as the terminus of a long voyage over the last 60 years that began with the assumption that voting was a direct reflection of voters' life conditions (Downs, 1957; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948). The importance of interpersonal social contexts gained increasing importance in subsequent research on political attitudes (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Hyman's (1959) seminal work on political socialization called attention to the process by which social institutions instill political values in the young. The authors of *The American Voter* (Campbell, Converse, Stokes, & Miller, 1960) readdressed these themes from a psychosocial perspective by assigning personal attitudes a decisive role and pointing to party identification as a critical factor in explaining the stability of voting. Their views had an enduring impact both on emphasizing the influence of early social experiences and on subsequent research on the long-lasting influence of emotional bonds (Sears, 1983; Sears & Funk, 1991, 1999; Sears, Lau, Tyler, & Allen, 1980; Sears & Levy, 2003).

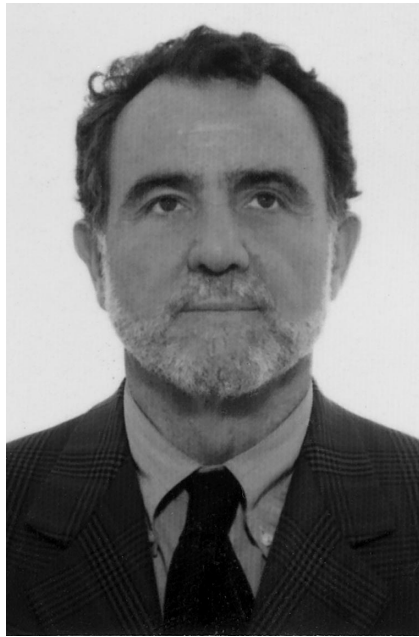
Over time, the conceptual forefront featured attempts to uncover the reasoning of individual voters, the unique organization of their motives, beliefs, and habits, that, taken together, make sense of their political choices. The

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seminal contributions of Rokeach (1968, 1973, 1979) exerted a lasting influence in providing a clear conceptualization of values and value systems, and in assigning values a decisive role in organizing political evaluations and preferences.

Attitude researchers increasingly turned toward analyzing core political values, namely, overarching principles that served to bind together many more specific attitudes and beliefs toward government, citizenship, and society (Conover & Feldman, 1984; Converse, 1964). The voter was portrayed as an active agent who pursues “the best match or the least mismatch between his or her personal set of attitudes and beliefs and his or her perception of the platforms and the record of parties” (Himmelweit, Humphreys, Jaeger, & Katz, 1981, p. 11). Popkin (1991) extended this view by stating that political information digested by the public is largely mediated by preferences, beliefs, and expectations. Voters were thereby assigned the role of reasoning agents utilizing a variety of “satisficing” strategies.

As the ethos of modernity posits the reflexive agent at the core of any discourse on governance and polity (Witrock, 1999), a corresponding shift has moved the focus toward individual variables and away from group-affiliated processes. Modern voters are likely to use cognitive heuristics, with the image of candidates playing a central role in coloring and anchoring their impressions and decisions (Caciagli & Corbetta, 2002; Delli Carpini, Huddy, & Shapiro, 1996). Yet does greater attention to candidates’ personal characteristics reflect a more rational or more reactive attitude toward politics? To what extent do diverse factors converge or compete in assigning personal characteristics of both voters and candidates a more central role in political reasoning and choice?

Dynamic Interplay of Personality and Politics

Politics involves institutions and systems of norms and principles of power management, ideally designed and operated for the common good. Personality involves systems of distinctive self-regulatory mechanisms and structures for guiding affective, cognitive, and motivational processes. These internal systems guide people toward achieving individual and collective goals, while providing coherence and continuity in behavioral patterns across different settings. These personality processes also create, foster, and preserve a sense of personal identity (Bandura, 2001; Caprara & Cervone, 2000; Mischel & Shoda, 1998).

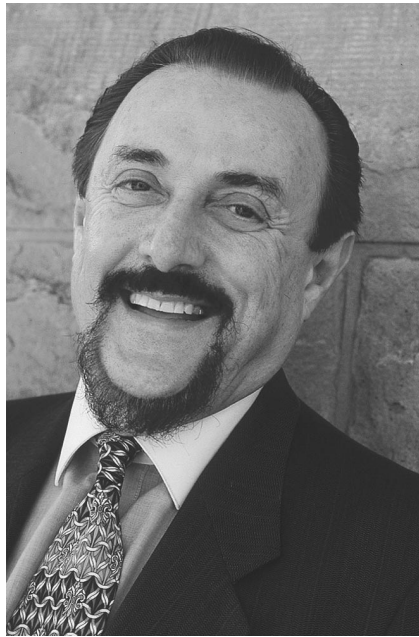
Just how such societal and individual systems might be related has long been a source of speculation and serious concern for philosophers, political scientists, psychologists, and laypeople. In the past, these entities were conceptualized as functioning at different levels and with different operational structures, but current views tend to assimilate rather than contrast critical commonalities and reciprocal interactions between politics and personality.

Governmental institutions have been created and designed to set and preserve conditions that allow society to function in harmony and allow individuals within the society to experience satisfaction in their lives. Political discourse shapes basic perspectives on options, goals, attitudes, and values, but as citizens bring to the political arena needs and aspirations for personal and social well-being, they in turn begin to influence the agenda and behavior of politicians.

Politics in modern democracies aims to be the realm within which citizens operate through institutions to pursue the optimal conditions for personal, social, and communal growth. Such ambitious goals cannot be fully appreciated without clarification of the set of psychological processes underlying political choices, consent formation, concerted political action, and effective governance. That quest invigorates investigations of the synergistic influence of affect and cognitive reasoning that lead to political preferences, decisions, and actions. It also encourages new understandings of the distinctive characteristics and relationships among the various agents in the political arena.

Early Studies of Personality and Politics

Similar issues were addressed by an earlier generation of theorists, who focused on the personalities of the main actors, of leaders (politicians) and followers (voters). A focus on personality marked the first phase of political psychology by pointing to early experiences and traits as main determinants of political orientation and stability of political attitudes and choices (McGuire, 1993). Psychoanalysis seemed to provide a reasonable theoretical basis for selecting and organizing empirical findings relating personality types to political orientation. Personality provided a framework with which to organize phenotypic behavioral differences and dispositions, attitudes, and motives, and it provided a lexicon to tap stable individual



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tendencies underlying recurring or habitual behavioral patterns.

Early intuitions drawn on clinical reasoning and *The Authoritarian Personality* exemplify these main contributions prior to World War II and during the following decade (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Lasswell, 1930, 1948). These clinical studies turned into psychobiographical studies and continued to develop over the ensuing decades, primarily focusing on the personalities of leaders. Eventually interest in psychoanalytical exploration declined, and most scholars turned toward more sophisticated, in-depth case studies and historiographical analyses (see Barber, 1965; Cocks, 1986; Erikson, 1969; George & George, 1956; Glad, 1973; Hermann, 1977).

Championing the nomothetical approach versus more qualitative inquiry were researchers from a host of theoretical perspectives. They proposed connections between political behavior and various individual-differences constructs in personality and social psychology, such as dispositions, social attitudes, motives, and values.

However, earlier approaches to individual differences in politics focused on dispositions or social attitudes but lacked a general theory of personality functioning and development. They were also limited because of the lack of consensus on any standardized assessment of personality and because the focus on multiple constructs was not guided by an integrated conceptual vision (Brewster Smith, 1968; Knutson, 1973). Findings regarding individual psychological differences taken in isolation and in disregard of situational variables were difficult to compare and did not lead to the development of cumulative knowledge in this domain. Rather, the study of personal predisposition, including attitudes, motives, decision styles, modes of inter-

action, and expertise, had to be pursued in combination with the study of situational factors that may enhance or moderate the effect of particular personal characteristics (Greenstein, 1975).

The Cognitive and Affective Revolutions

Following the cognitive revolution of the late 1960s, and the affective revolution of the past two decades, research on personality and politics gained new impetus, although often indirectly and along different lines from previous research (Iyengar & McGuire, 1993; Kuklinski, 2001; Lau & Sears, 1986). Studies of the perception of politicians disclosed the importance of affect in political judgment (Kinder, Peters, Abelson, & Fiske, 1980). This body of research paved the way for subsequent studies on voters' affective reactions to politicians; on candidates' affective displays and impression management; and on the role that emotions, feelings, mood, and motivation play in political thinking and choice (Glaser & Salovey, 1998; Lau, 1990; Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2000; Ottati & Wyer, 1993; Rahn, Kroeger, & Kite, 1996).

Studies on political cognition have investigated how political information gets stored and organized in memory, how it gets retrieved, and how existing knowledge structures influence learning and inferences about political issues, parties, and candidates. These studies have helped in explaining how and why different citizens care about different "things" in politics (Lau, 1989; McGraw, 2000). Studies of political reasoning have pointed to a variety of strategies that people use to select and organize political information, to manage complexity, and to make reasonable choices (Lau, 2003; Lau & Sears, 1986; Lodge & McGraw, 1995; Simon, 1985, 1995; Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, 1991).

One branch of research investigated the path people take to deal with political issues, and the interrelated patterns of affect and cognition that result in stable individual characteristics, such as "integrative complexity." This research received considerable attention for examining personalities of members of political elites and of the general public, pointing to two different dimensions that combine in political reasoning, those of differentiation and integration. *Differentiation* refers to the variety of aspects of an issue or decision that an individual takes into account in making judgments; *integration* refers to the connections that are perceived and formed among various ideas and elements of judgment (Tetlock, 1983, 1984, 1985; Tetlock & Suedfeld, 1988). Current studies continue to point to individual differences in information processing, with particular focus on complexity and sophistication as critical in political reasoning and choice (Knight, 1985; Krosnick, 1990; Luskin, 1987, 1990; Pierce, 1993; Suedfeld & Tetlock, 2001).

Another direction that research took pointed to the importance of appraising the personalities of candidates, as investigators searched for the personality dimensions associated with their perceived likeability, accountability, and distinctiveness. These appraisals can be influenced by political predispositions, such as ideology, partisanship, and

political preference, as well as by voters' personalities. However, a number of scholars agree that judgments about candidates are structured around particularly central and relevant traits, such as competence, leadership, integrity, trustworthiness, and empathy. The central triad receiving special emphasis in this line of research has been candidates' competence, integrity, and leadership qualities (Conover & Feldman, 1986; Funk, 1996, 1999; Jones & Hudson, 1996; Kinder, 1986; Lau, 1986; Lodge, McGraw, & Stroh, 1989; Pancer, Brown, & Barr, 1999; Peffley, 1990; Pierce, 1993; Rahn, Aldrich, Borgida, & Sullivan, 1990; Sullivan, Aldrich, Borgida, & Rahn, 1990).

Most of the approaches addressing the personality of political leaders and elites have relied either on public records as the database or on biographies and content analysis of narratives (Winter, 1992). One set of research has focused on politicians' worldviews, cognitive styles, competence in political tasks, modes of interpersonal interaction, and orientation in conflicts (Barber, 1985; George & George, 1998; Prost, 2003). Another has focused on traits and motives indirectly through content analysis of primary source material and biographical data, or by asking experts to complete standard personality rating scales (Etheredge, 1978; Rubenzer, Faschingbauer, & Ones, 2000; Simonton, 1986, 1990; Winter, 1987, 1992). Although most research continues to rely on a variety of indirect means for assessing personality "at a distance" (Feldman & Valenty, 2001; Valenty & Feldman, 2002; Winter, 2003b), only one research team has directly addressed personality through nomothetic methods (Costantini & Craik, 1980).

At the intersection of personality and social psychology, the study of right-wing authoritarianism and political conservatism has continued to bridge social attitudes and a variety of individual differences in personality. Among these personality measures are self-esteem, openness to experience, need for order and structure, cognitive closure, uncertainty tolerance, integrative complexity, and fear of threat or loss (Altemeyer, 1996, 1998; Jost & Thompson, 2000; Lavine et al., 1999; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). The recent meta-analysis of this extensive literature by Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway (2003a) makes a strong case for political conservatism as motivated social cognition. Whereas the core ideology of conservatism stresses justification for social-economic inequality and resistance to change, its motivational dynamism centers on needs to manage uncertainty and threat. (See also the challenge by Greenberg & Jonas, 2003, and rebuttal by Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003b.)

A Reformulated Conception of Personality and Social Dynamics in Politics

Our research team (integrating resources at the University of Rome "La Sapienza" and Stanford University) has extended the value of personality for a unified theory of impression formation, self-presentation, and political orientation. We have done so by recombining the studies of

(a) voters' impressions of politicians' personalities; (b) voters' and politicians' self-presentations; and (c) traits, values, and political orientation (Caprara & Barbaranelli, 2000; Caprara, Barbaranelli, Consiglio, Picconi, & Zimbardo, 2003; Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Zimbardo, 1997, 1999; Caprara, Schwartz, Capanna, Vecchione, & Barbaranelli, 2004; Caprara & Vecchione, 2004). Our findings attest to the role that personality plays as a unifying conceptual construct in the realm of political discourse. Personality does so by conveying the unity, coherence, continuity, and exercise of personal control vital in political discourse.

The remainder of this article offers the body of empirical evidence and the conceptual reasoning that has led us to a new model of political preference centered in an agentic and purposive view of personality functioning. The four main paths taken by this presentation begin with an analysis of the vital role played by the language of personality in the realm of politics. Next, we focus on a set of basic behavioral tendencies that voters use in forming their perceptions of politicians' personalities. Then, we address the unique role of self-reported traits and values in distinguishing voters and politicians of opposing political coalitions. Finally, we elaborate on the critical role of personality at the crossroads of psychology, political science and politics.

The Language of Personality

Perceptions of the personal characteristics of candidates competing in the political arena have gained considerable importance in a world that acknowledges the importance of persuasion and consent in the exercise of power, and in which the influence of images conveyed by the media is pervasive. Personality, in fact, now accounts for a considerable portion of the variance in candidate preference accorded by voters, often more than traditional political programs (Jones & Hudson, 1996; Pierce, 1993).

It is likely that the image the electorate develops of candidates is one in which candidates' knowledge and expectations are projected to guide voters' assessments and attributions of their worth. That social-perceptual processing influences their preferences and the ultimate dichotomous decision to vote for given candidates and oppose others. Thus, it is critical for politicians to convey an image of their own personality that, as far as possible, matches the desires and expectations of their potential followers, given that various voters may be sensitive to different attributes (Funk, 1999). A crucial skill for politicians is learning to speak the "language of personality"—namely, to navigate properly in the domain of personality attributes by identifying and conveying those individual characteristics that are most appealing at a certain time to a particular constituency.

Such political candidates would do well to examine recent progress in personality psychology, where a consensual framework for classifying and organizing personality characteristics seems finally to have been established after years of dispute about competing taxonomies. They would discover that they need only focus on a few dimensions of

personality and their subdivisions to skillfully portray central personality features by “adopting” as self-referents those basic adjectives characterizing those dimensions. The five-factor model of personality provides that common, concise language for describing the central components of personality. Across a wide body of research the same five factors have repeatedly emerged as central broad personality dimensions or traits. They represent a point of convergence of the psycholexical and questionnaire approaches in personality that has proven capable of subsuming most traditional trait taxonomies (De Raad, 2000; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1993; John & Srivastava, 1999; Ostendorf & Angleitner, 1992).

These “Big Five” are Extraversion (or Energy), Agreeableness (or Friendliness), Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability (or Neuroticism), and Openness to Experience (or Intellect/Culture). We refer henceforth to these Big Five dimensions as Energy, Friendliness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness, in accordance with the questionnaire we used for their assessment. *Energy* refers to an individual’s level of activity, vigor, and assertiveness. *Friendliness* refers to concerns and sensitiveness or kindness toward others. *Conscientiousness* refers to self-regulation in both proactive and inhibitory aspects. *Emotional Stability* refers to the capability of controlling one’s affect and emotional reactions. *Openness* refers to the broadness of one’s own cultural interest and exposure to new ideas, people, and experiences.

When Parsimony Dominates Over Distinctiveness

Across a host of studies, judges and raters use five personality dimensions when describing themselves and most others. However, we found a very different phenomenon when it came to judgments of the personalities of political leaders by voters. In this special case, the traditional five-factor extraction of personality traits did not accord with voters’ typical appraisals (Caprara et al., 1997).

Voters in Italy and the United States simplified their personality judgments of candidates in ongoing election campaigns (Bill Clinton and Bob Dole in the United States, and Silvio Berlusconi and Romano Prodi in Italy) by restricting the usual five factors to a blend of only two main factors. The collapsed factors included one blending Energy and Openness and the second blending Friendliness, Conscientiousness, and Emotional Stability. These two blends were the same in Italy as in the United States. They were generated from a large sample (more than 2,000 voters) of personality appraisals based on a common list of 25 adjectives containing 5 markers for each of the Big Five dimensions. However, there was no reduction in the expected “penta-factorial” structure when these common adjectives were used to evaluate voters’ own personality (in the form of self-reports). Five was also the norm when voters evaluated the personalities of famous celebrities or athletes, such as basketball player Magic Johnson. In all such personality judgments the standard rule of five traits prevailed.

Such simplified perceptions of the personalities of political leaders may derive from a cognitively efficient strategy that voters adopt to cope with the massive amount of daily information to which they are exposed, and to guide their dichotomous decisions given that ultimately they must translate complex perceptions and preferences into a simple behavioral act of voting for one particular candidate. It should be noted that judgments of politicians differ from those of most other “target” individuals, because citizens are exposed simultaneously to a huge amount of competing pro and con information associated with candidates, by their party and the opposition. A functional motive probably led people to focus on what they most care for and expect from politicians at a given time in a given context. But they do so at the cost of sacrificing a more detailed, informative, fine-grained evaluation of the candidates’ personalities. Thus, the characteristics that seemed to count when voters in the United States were evaluating the personalities of Bill Clinton and Bob Dole were similar to those that emerged when Italian voters evaluated the personalities of Silvio Berlusconi and Romano Prodi—who were quite different from each other in many ways.

It is likely that when rating targets that elicit extreme evaluations, people’s judgments tend to get broader and simpler (Peabody & Goldberg, 1989). Indeed, the polysemic properties of words may well operate in the service of the tendency of people to perceive the personality of their leaders and their leaders’ opponents along sharply reduced, polarized dimensions. Therefore, we warn against the simple assumption that the same personality adjectives always carry the same connotations when used to describe the personalities of politicians as they do for descriptions of nonpoliticians. Rather, it is critical to identify the personal dimensions that, at a certain time and in a certain context, serve to anchor the impressions that voters form and the judgments they make about politicians’ personalities. No less important is ascertaining whether the same adjectives carry the same meanings across candidates and contexts.

However, such general cautiousness should not lead to underestimating the robustness of the phenomenon that we have uncovered. This unique simplification of the way politicians’ personalities are perceived was not limited to just the few main political leaders, or to those in the midst of election campaigns, as shown in our initial study. Indeed, our subsequent findings have demonstrated that cognitive parsimony comes to dominate over efforts to arrive at a more discriminating perceptual mapping of the personalities of politicians even long after an election campaign has concluded. A follow-up study replicated our earlier findings when voters were asked to evaluate the personality of Berlusconi when he was the chief of the opposition and of Prodi when he was prime minister, along with the personalities of two well-known Italian party secretaries: the secretary of Left Democrats, D’Alema, and the secretary of the National Alliance, Fini (Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Zimbardo, 2002). A subsequent study further replicated our findings when voters evaluated the personality of Prodi, who was serving as president of the European Commission,

and of Berlusconi, serving as prime minister (Caprara et al., 2004). Thus, the same conclusion of the uniquely *simple* personalities of politicians has been replicated both immediately after elections and during the political campaigning period, on politicians with different degrees of political leadership, and with the same politicians serving in different roles.

Our findings confirm earlier results showing that (a) perceptions of politicians' personalities tend to remain remarkably stable across several years of evaluations by the general public (A. H. Miller, Wattenberg, & Malanchuk, 1986), (b) voters process information about candidates in schematic fashion (Conover & Feldman, 1986), and (c) traits play a particular role in organizing knowledge and political preferences (Funk, 1999; Pierce, 1993).

Ultimately, Energy and Friendliness were found to serve as primary anchors, subsuming other traits, for evaluating politicians' personalities both during campaigns and several years subsequently. One may note that these two "politicians' attractors" are important ingredients of those personal characteristics that have frequently been reported to count most importantly among electorates in the democracies of the Western world, namely, competence and integrity (Jones & Hudson, 1996; Popkin, 1991). It is interesting to realize that these central traits are also closely related to the most dominant of human motives, namely, agency, at the core of Energy, and communion, at the core of Friendliness (Bakan, 1966).

When Voters' Self-Reported Personality and Their Perception of Politicians Matter

A second way in which personality and politics may interface is in the convergence of personality profiles of voters and their choice of political party. In an early study that used a standard questionnaire—the Big Five Questionnaire (BFQ; Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, & Perugini, 1993)¹—to assess the Big Five across a large sample of Italian voters, specific personality profiles were associated significantly with preference for either of two contemporary political coalitions: the center-left's Ulivo and the center-right's Casa delle Libertá. These two coalitions, although encompassing most of the political spectrum, are composed of heterogeneous arrays of former political adversaries. They function as expedient, pragmatic electoral units commonly identified as "center-left" and "center-right." Despite considerable overlap in the demographic structure of supporters of both coalitions, those who endorsed the platform of the center-right coalition scored higher than their counterparts on Energy and Conscientiousness, whereas those who preferred the center-left coalition showed higher degrees of Friendliness and Openness. One should note that these findings accord with other research outcomes that highlight a positive relation between Openness and liberal ideologies (McCrae, 1996).

These relationships between voter personality traits and preferred political coalition were independent of any apparent influences of age, gender, or education. But when

these demographic factors were statistically controlled, we found that the trait profiles of the two sets of party voters mirrored to a considerable extent the primary aims and media images conveyed by the two leading coalitions and their leaders, respectively (Caprara et al., 1999).

Whereas the center-right campaigned mostly on entrepreneurship and business freedom and Berlusconi's image was commonly identified with Energy, the center-left campaigned mostly on solidarity and social welfare, with Prodi's image commonly identified with Friendliness. Their followers likewise were high on those same traits and differed from each other on traits that matched the different programs of two coalitions. Our initial supposition regarding a kind of correspondence between self-presentation and political preference was corroborated by a subsequent study in which partisans of these two coalitions reported their own personality using the same list of Big Five markers they had been using to assess the perception of the personalities of the main politicians. Citizens oriented toward the center-right showed a significantly higher degree of Energy and Conscientiousness than citizens who preferred the center-left. Furthermore, a greater similarity was found between voters' self-reported personality and their appraisals of politicians belonging to their preferred coalitions than with their appraisals of the politicians of the opposite coalitions (Caprara et al., 2002).

We reasoned that either citizens' political preferences are in accord with their self-reported personality, with voting serving an expressive function with regard to self-perception, or that citizens assimilate their preferred candidates' personalities to their own. In both cases, personality characteristics that are reported and inferred may be critical to strengthening the bond between voters, parties, and candidates. It may be that followers' own self-appraisals and their perceived similarity to leaders both tend to be positively biased because of egocentric favoritism or in-group positivity biases (Capozza & Brown, 2000; Greenwald, 1980; Sears, 1982; Tajfel, 1981). Alternatively, it may be that the positive affect associated with voter appraisal of their personality and that of their leaders serves as a catalyst that further strengthens consent and appeal.

Dispositional Heuristics

Modern politics presents voters with an enormous amount of information to process from multiple media sources about issues, candidates, parties, appeals, negative campaigns, and assorted propaganda seductions for their elusive vote. The bounded rationality of citizens prompts them to compensate for the complexity of political issues and the limitations of their political expertise by using cognitive heuristics as efficient mental shortcuts for organizing this

¹ The reliability and validity of the BFQ have been established on large samples across different cultures (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Bermudez, Maslach, & Ruch, 2000). All five dimensions have shown high correlations with analogous dimensions of the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1992), attesting to its construct validity (Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Maslach, 1997).

mass of incoming information and for simplifying political choices (Simon, 1985, 1995; Sniderman et al., 1991).

One form of judgmental heuristic is a kind “dispositional heuristic” that anchors impressions, as well as inferences and voters’ beliefs, to those traits used to describe oneself and other people. In pointing to a kind of dispositional heuristic, we draw from work done by social and personality psychologists on schematicity, chronic accessibility, and spontaneous activation of personality inferences (Fiske, Lau, & Smith, 1990; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Higgins, 1999; Uleman, Newman, & Moskowitz, 1996). Dispositional constructs, while summarizing consensual experiences and carrying specific expectations with regard to persons in situations, provide parsimonious ways to organize complex knowledge sets. They also extend control over one’s own and others’ future performance, on the common assumption that personality traits are relatively stable and that individual character is relatively constant.

Thus, preexisting knowledge, in terms of individual tendencies and traits, organizes incoming information about oneself and others. Moreover, it is likely that people differ in the nature of the personality constructs that are cognitively available and readily accessible to them. This may be true not only in response to various situational demands and purposes but also in accordance with voters’ political identification. Ultimately, that accordance extends to the idiosyncratic characteristics of the target of their evaluation, politicians.

In this regard, Energy and Friendliness dominated over other dimensions in voters’ perceptions, independently of their political orientation, and members of both parties rated their leader higher than his opponent on both dimensions. Yet Friendliness was the first factor extracted from both followers and opponents’ ratings of Prodi, whereas it was the second factor extracted from them with regard to Berlusconi.

Likeability Heuristics

Another relevant heuristic at work in the political domain is a kind of “likeability heuristic” that supplies the emotional glue to cement preferences into consent formation (Sniderman et al., 1991). Likeability heuristics highlight the role likes and dislikes may play in voters’ appraisals of politicians. This judgmental shortcut makes evident that predictions about what others believe are more likely to be right when one takes into account what others think weighted by one’s feelings toward them. In a similar vein, we speculate that voters, while using traits that are more relevant to them personally, also appraise politicians as more or less similar to themselves. They do so depending on the feelings they have toward the politicians: The more apparent perceived similarity with their candidates, the more positively they are perceived.

As politicians invite agreement from across a spectrum of positions, likeability heuristics foster either “assimilation processes” or “contrast processes” (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). Such cognitive processes exaggerate similarities between partisans and their leaders as well as accentuate differences between voters and politicians of

opposite parties or coalitions. Such affect consistency is critical in providing “a certain cement to mass belief systems, and so supplies a foundation, not only for estimating the preference (and positions) of others, but also for inferring one’s own” (Sniderman et al., 1991, p. 115).

When Personalities of Voters Encounter Personalities of Politicians

The generality of findings in this area is limited, owing to a number of methodological problems associated with a database composed of psychobiographies of politicians, content analysis of archival material, the evaluations by experts of politicians’ personalities, and other types of case studies (Costantini & Craik, 1980; Hermann, 1977). It is apparent that politicians are not generally directly accessible to students of personality for their research. Public officials are reluctant to comply with the standard assessment procedures that are required for “nomothetic” research owing to their practical concerns for the potential misuse of such personal information. That reluctance raises doubts regarding the reliability of information that may eventually be acquired directly from politicians. Their need for discretion and concerns for social desirability conspire against having politicians filling out personality questionnaires.

Thus, studies applying standard personality measures to politicians have been rare, often limited to small samples. One exception is an early study by Costantini and Craik (1980) that undertook a comprehensive analysis of politicians’ personality. They applied the Adjective Check List (Gough, 1960) to a large sample of presidential delegation slate members during the California campaign years of 1960, 1964, 1968, 1972, and 1976.

This study is unique and remains valuable in spite of the heterogeneity of political activists (at the time of their participation, 40% of the respondents were holders of party office, and only 15% were public office holders, the rest being merely delegates). Party activists reported higher scores than the general norm in self-confidence, achievement, and dominance. Republicans scored higher than average (and higher than Democrats) on personal adjustment, order, self-control, and endurance, and lower than average (and lower than Democrats) on change and compassion. Democrats scored higher than average (and higher than Republicans) on lability, exhibition, and autonomy.

Indeed, these distinctive characteristics of politicians are not surprising when one considers a kind of congruency between the personality characteristics of the Republicans and their traditional political agendas. Although the correspondence between the distinctive personality characteristics of Democrats and their political orientations may seem less obvious when one compares their scores with the average population, the higher scores of Democrats in autonomy, change, and compassion than their Republican counterparts is consistent with their greater emphasis on liberal and social policies and on civil rights.

We decided to invest considerable effort to secure a relatively large sample of current politicians holding major

political offices to complete the BFQ assessment instrument. In the spring of 2001, prior to the national election in Italy, the same BFQ used in our prior studies of voters was sent to all members of the Italian Parliament, to all of the Italian members of the European Parliament, and to all members of councils of three main regions (Lazio, Sicily, and Piedmont) and three provinces and municipalities (Rome, Catania, and Turin; Caprara et al., 2003).

The questionnaire was accompanied by a letter on Rome University stationery presenting the aims of the scientific research and guaranteeing anonymity and privacy, followed up by phone calls and other forms of reminders and encouragement. Over the subsequent three months, 118 questionnaires were returned (103 from men and 15 from women), about 10% of all questionnaires that were sent through the mail. This return fairly represents the gender and partisan composition of the main Italian political institutions and is equally representative of the different institutional bodies sampled. Given the limited number of female respondents, we analyzed only questionnaires from male politicians ($N = 103$), comparing them first with means from a large sample of the average voting population and then comparing them according to their political office and their political affiliation (center-right or center-left coalition).

All politicians differed from the general norms in their higher scores in Energy and Friendliness (at a .01 level of significance), namely, on the same dimensions that voters use as primary anchors for evaluating politicians' personalities. Politicians of both coalitions scored average in Emotional Stability and Openness. Their Social Desirability average score was significantly greater than the norm. However, partial correlations revealed no differential effects due to Social Desirability on any of the Big Five factors. Center-right politicians scored higher in Energy and Conscientiousness than center-left politicians, at .01 and .05 significance levels, respectively. These results replicate what we found earlier among their supporters and in general accord with the political agenda of their coalition. The level of office held (namely, member of European Parliament, of Italian Senate or Congress, or of regional, provincial, or city council) showed no differential effects. Of course, the low return rate raises questions of selectivity, but the correspondence between this unique data set for politicians' self-reported personality and that of our earlier studies of voters' judgments of their personality helps validate the value of this sample. Also, the absolute number of participants, over 100 politicians, must be considered an important start in gathering direct data on this elusive, exclusive group.

The Impact of Values on Voting Behavior

The important role of traits in the process of personalizing politics should be complemented by a fuller appreciation of the contributions of values as key predictors of voting behavior under certain conditions. The general importance of values in political preferences, championed by Rokeach

(1973, 1979), is being acknowledged by students of political attitudes (Zaller, 1992). Contemporary scholars are emphasizing the central role of values in politics, stating that "underlying all political belief systems are ultimate terminal values that specify the end states of public policy" (Tetlock, 2000, p. 247) and that values "allow people to organize their political evaluations in a relatively consistent manner" (S. Feldman, 2003, p. 491).

Values are cognitive representations of desirable, abstract, transsituational goals that serve as guiding principles in people's lives (Rohan, 2000; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). Values assume a particularly informative role in voters' political choices whenever universal ideals are at stake and when political parties profess a set of value-oriented ideals. Yet there has been surprisingly little empirical research on the impact of values on political decisions in different social and cultural contexts (Barnea & Schwartz, 1998; Feldman, 2003).

Two recent studies in our general program of research on politics and personality offer a new start in this direction (Caprara et al., 2004; Caprara & Vecchione, 2004). We assessed the relative contributions to political choices made by traits (using the five-factor model and the BFQ), by a standard set of demographic variables, and by personal values (using Schwartz's theory of basic values and his Portrait Value Questionnaire [PVQ]; Schwartz, 1992). The 10 basic values tapped by the PVQ are universal characteristics of the human condition: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security. The theory specifies the structure of their dynamic relationships, assigning the values positions around a circle according to their compatibility. The 10 values are organized into four higher level value types. Conservation values (security, conformity, and tradition) call for submissive self-restriction, preservation of traditional practices, and protection of stability. In opposition is openness to change values (self-direction and stimulation), which encourage independence of thought, feeling, and action, as well as receptiveness to change. Self-transcendence values (universalism and benevolence) emphasize acceptance of others as equals and concern for their welfare. In opposition is self-enhancement values (power and achievement), which encourage pursuing one's own success and dominance over others. The content and the relationships among these 10 values have been extensively corroborated in more than 200 samples from 67 separate studies, with validation of the PVQ across 70 countries (Schwartz, 1992, 1994, 2003).

We found that traditional demographics had no utility in differentiating among voters of main political coalitions, with income, education, age, and gender having negligible effects. In dramatic contrast, both traits and values did prove to be effective predictors. Once again, we replicated our initial trait results in finding that center-right voters scored higher in both Energy and Conscientiousness and lower in both Friendliness and Openness than did center-left voters. With regard to value differentiation, center-right voters scored higher in power and security and lower in universalism and benevolence than did their center-left

peers. Thus, differences in values among voters mirrored differences in traits while matching the political agendas of the two coalitions. The alleged virtues of the market economy championed by the center-right political agenda are revealed in their high scores on Energy and Conscientiousness in the domain of traits, whereas higher scores on power and security in the domain of values attest to the traditional concern of the right wing for recognition of individual achievements and social order. Similarly, the alleged virtues of the welfare state advanced by the center-left agenda are revealed in their high scores on Friendliness and Openness in the domain of traits, whereas universalism and benevolence in the domain of values attest to the traditional concern of the left wing for equality and social justice (Bobbio, 1995; Rokeach, 1973). Each of these combinations of traits and values dominated the predictive value of traditional sociodemographic variables.

Of particular importance was our finding that values had a much greater predictive utility than did traits. In the psychological foundation of voters' political party preferences, values assume primacy over traits. Not only did values account for more variance than traits, they largely subsumed the influence of traits when their unique and joint effects were partitioned.

These findings underscore the superiority of moral principles over sociostructural variables and personality traits in predicting voting behavior, paralleling results from a recent study conducted on a national sample of the Italian electorate (Ricolfi, 2002). Moral preferences in civiness, integrity, and solidarity were found to account for a greater portion of the variance than traits and all sociodemographic variables combined.

Personality Dynamics

We believe that the body of research outlined here begins to support our contention that personality plays a new important role at the intersection of multiple academic disciplines and of different subdisciplines within psychology. But to do so, personality conceptions must go beyond traditional views that conceive of personality as architecture of individual differences in behavioral tendencies. As recently stated by Winter (2003a, 2003b), personality is complex and made up of different kinds of variables, including traits, motives, and cognitions, all interacting within varied social contexts.

A "new look" at personality goes beyond such analyses of constellations of individual differences in traits or values to incorporating their activation by situational influences and sociohistorical contexts. Moreover, such individual differences are best understood and appreciated within a comprehensive model of personality functioning. Such a model should account for the links between values, traits, and political choices across time and over situations.

We conceive of personality as a dynamic, self-regulatory system emerging and operating over the life course in the service of personal adaptations (see Caprara & Cervone, 2000). Thus, it seems reasonable to claim that the study of personality plays a conceptually integrative function among various branches of psychology by enabling

them to deal with basic issues of the unity, continuity, and coherence of individuals functioning as purposive self-regulating systems. This new approach to personality is one that encompasses both the general psychological processes that empower people to regulate their personal and social experiences and the individual differences and unique dispositional qualities that arise from these psychological processes.

As people develop and function in ongoing processes of reciprocal interaction with their environment, their transactions with the social world lay the foundation for the emergence of "agentic" capabilities. Such capabilities allow people to extend control over their own personal experiences and to contribute proactively to the course of their lives. In this view, the phenotypic structure of personality is conceived as a functional constellation of patterns of behavior that result primarily from experience. That constellation, in turn, reflects the level of organization achieved by a variety of concurrent subsystems. When those systems are operating in concert, they come to regulate affect, motivation, cognition, and action.

Personality presents innumerable facets, namely traits, motives, values, and self-beliefs, which may serve multiple functions. Traits and values become ever more critical in the formation of candidates' impressions and voters' preferences as politics gets personalized.

Traits

The traits that people use to recognize themselves and significant others are critical in providing the semantic network through which affect energizes cognition and action. In particular, when categories of judgment get restricted and evaluative concerns come to the fore, as in politics, traits may serve as a medium for both feelings and knowledge. Voters selectively pay attention to visible characteristics of politicians, and they use available or generally accessible descriptors that accord with their own beliefs, expectations, and concerns. A kind of trait heuristic operates at the core of the impressions that voters form of a politicians' personality. That same trait-based heuristic allows followers to count on the stability of appraised personality characteristics of politicians to endure beyond transient impressions and in the future when campaign promises are to be realized. It allows them to have confidence that their judgment and vote will be reflected in the predicted performance of politicians they favor. Thus, as voters are inclined to organize their knowledge about politicians' personalities around qualities that evoke trust and mastery, politicians become adept at conveying self-images that are seen as particularly desirable and serve as proxies for those same dimensions.

Values

It is reasonable to predict that voters will prefer candidates that share their same worldviews and same principles that guide their lives. Thus, the more voters acknowledge in their leaders the same behavioral tendencies that are most valuable for them, the more voters may easily extend such a similarity to inferred motives and values. Whereas people

have direct access to the principles that orient their own life and accordingly tend to conform their behavior to their values, they may have access to others' values only indirectly through inference from the habitual behaviors of those target people—namely, from their visible dispositions. Thus, traits come to play a critical role in matching values, first in impression formation and then in preferences.

Just as voters assign particular importance to competence and integrity, politicians work to solicit agreement across a broad spectrum of constituencies by conveying their own image along the same generic dimensions. This might explain why politicians in general score higher than average in the two great attractors that drive voters' impression formation: Energy and Friendliness. But this obviously is not sufficient to gain the preferences of all voters.

In reality, potential voters appraise the image that politicians convey by resonating with different feelings to candidates of different coalitions and parties. Thus, it is probable that the closer the match is between voters' perceived personality of candidates and their own self-reported personality, the more one may infer that similar values underlie similar traits.

Recent findings from our laboratory further point to a higher similarity between voters' value priorities and the priorities they attribute to their leaders, thereby extending what we referred to as likeability heuristics. Similarities in traits and values, either observed or inferred, become associated with evaluations, endorsements, and firm beliefs in the credibility of given politicians to deliver on their claims and promises. We want to trust competent leaders, but we also want to like them personally, and this is easier when they are perceived as essentially similar to us. The extent to which voters perceive their leaders' personalities as similar to their own is critical in humanizing abstract icons and endorsing politicians' efforts and claims.

Voter–Politician Congruencies

This comparability effect is not merely a projection by voters; it holds as well for politicians themselves. Recall our findings that the self-reported personality of politicians is more similar to the self-reported personality of those who vote for them than it is to the self-reported personality of their opponents' voters.

We believe that the pattern of findings across our body of research supports the view that a powerful *congruency principle* is functioning in the personalization of politics. Voter–politician congruency operates as the humanizing glue linking affect, cognition, and action at different stages of political transactions. First, it operates in how voters activate schematic knowledge to appraise politicians' personality, selecting those attributes perceived to be most relevant to the political office, the current political–economic conditions, and then subsuming under them other personal characteristics. Next, it operates in how politicians, through their “media image crafters,” convey to the public the set of expressive behaviors that form an image highlighting those traits the electorate most values and shares. Further, it operates in how the self-reported person-

alities of leaders and followers are similar but differ from their opponents' self-reported personalities. Finally, it operates in how the distinctive personality characteristics reported by leaders and followers of opposite coalitions can be traced back to common values at the roots of ideals of their respective political agendas. This congruency element underscores the commonality of feelings, thoughts, values, and intentions of partisans, while accentuating the contrast with opponents. Although our findings address some traditional issues of personality and politics, we believe they cast the relevance of political orientation to understanding personality in a new light, as well as the role of personality dynamics in understanding political processes. A similar conception to our congruency principle is the matching hypothesis of Jost et al. (2003a). They argued that people adopt ideological belief systems, such as conservatism, right-wing authoritarianism, and social dominance orientation, “that are more likely to match their psychological needs for order, structure, and closure and the avoidance of uncertainty and threat” (Jost et al., 2003a, p. 341).

Values Before and After Traits

Our initial focus on traits led to discovering interesting patterns of relationships in the personalization of politics, but recent investigations promise even greater relevance of values in this domain. Traits and values are rooted in different intellectual traditions, the former in personality psychology and the latter in social psychology.

Traits are enduring dispositions, whereas values are enduring goals. Traits describe what people are like; values refer to what people consider important. Traits vary in the frequency and intensity of their occurrence; values vary in their priority as standards for judging behavior, events, and people. Yet it is likely that, although distinctive, values and traits operate in concert as components of the same self-system and influence one another reciprocally (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003; Bilsky & Schwartz, 1994; Caprara et al., 2004; Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, & Knafo, 2002).

Unfortunately, there has been no dominant integrative view of personality that includes both. Our primary intention was to illuminate the mechanisms of consent formation by better understanding the functions that individual differences in traits, whether self-reported or perceived, play in political choice. Ultimately, we came to believe that both self-presentation and political orientation reflect a common system of beliefs, worldviews, and values that are at the core of their correspondence.

Our recent findings have corroborated expectations of the particular ways in which values direct political orientations and in which values have greater predictive value than do traits in this domain (Caprara et al., 2004). Such findings mesh well with our view of personality as a proactive agentic system, in which personal goals and standards usually drive voluntary behavior (Bandura, 2001; Caprara & Cervone, 2000).

New research is revealing significant convergences between particular values and the specific set of behaviors that express them or promote their attainment (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). However, social norms have an impact on

such value–behavior relations. To the extent that strong group norms operate in a given domain, personal values are less influential than situational dynamics in directing behaviors that are value driven than when those norms are weaker. This is where the social context of individual voters comes into play, as family, friends, coworkers, schoolmates, and other reference groups can impose situational pressures to behave in line with their collective beliefs and values. As social psychologists have amply demonstrated, when individuals are enmeshed in situations with powerful external forces acting on them, dispositional tendencies can be minimized or swamped (Milgram, 1974; for a review, see Shoda, 1999; Zimbardo, 2004). Clearly, cross-disciplinary research is needed to reveal how personal values, traits, and normative pressures interact to influence the political decisions of various categories of voters.

Whereas voters are likely to justify their political choices and actions by referring to their basic values and those of the party platform, it is likely that traits may serve as anchors from which to infer politicians' motives and values. That is the place where traits may assume a primacy over values. In contrast to the relatively direct access voters have to their own purposes and to the principles that guide their actions, they become intuitive personality psychologists when they enter the political domain where they infer politicians' intentions, goals, and values from observing politicians' habitual behaviors as portrayed in the media.

Innovative programs of research can illuminate the interplay of traits and values to allow a better understanding of which aspects of personality–politics associations are sufficiently informed from a trait analysis and which demand a broader understanding of value-based issues that exist before and beyond individual traits. It seems essential to erect a common conceptual roof to cover the many valuable, but often disconnected, contributions of decades of research on affect, cognition, decision making, social influence, and political action if psychology is to optimize its value to political theory and practice.

Conclusions

The fields of cognitive, social, and emotion psychology each bring important inputs to understanding the kind of political processes outlined here. However, the study of personality, as a reflexive and purposive system, is at the center of their overlapping domains of expertise. As such, it may play a unique role in clarifying how affect and cognitive processes operate in tandem to help make sense of political judgments and decision making. A new science of personality may be able to serve three needed functions: (a) providing the lexicon for describing individual feelings and knowledge; (b) helping to reveal how individuals are able to extract coherence and congruency from very diverse and competing sources of political information; and (c) aiding in identifying the higher level mechanism that grants direction, continuity, and coherence to feelings, cognitions, and actions. Such a system may help promote understanding of how complex cognitive processes mesh with social–emotional processes to keep individual choices compatible

with those of similar others in one's reference groups. In so doing, it may elucidate the nature of the bonds that tie citizens to political parties and leaders. It may also aid in the understanding of changes in political reasoning and transitions in voters' minds.

As we have described, the distinctive patterns in traits and values of center-right and center-left voters mirror the traditional distinctions between political parties of the right (mostly concerned with freedom) and the left (mostly concerned with equality) only to a certain extent, while suggesting a more complex view of axial principles defining the space of political choice. Ultimately, this new conception of personality can contribute to the democratization of the entire political process by enabling citizens to have a higher sense of control and responsibility over their complex and constantly changing political environment.

The views presented here also may be of service to politicians interested in imparting the most desirable personality portrait to potential voters. Media-savvy political operatives concerned with idealized candidate "image crafting" can benefit from a deeper understanding of the dynamic relationships between voter and politician personalities. Political scientists may appreciate the analysis of patterns of interactions between personality, political campaigning, media shaping, and voter decision making. Our psychological colleagues may find value from discovering the unique role that political reasoning, affect, traits, and values play in expanding our traditional conceptions of personality. Finally, enabling citizens to exert greater control over the psychological and social mechanisms through which their participation gets expressed enriches our democratic institutions.

Over the course of this article we have moved from emphasizing the personalization of politics in terms of the distinctive properties of individuals as reflexive and purposive agents to the conviction that voters should make political choices that accord more with the values and basic principles that guide their lives. When they do, we can expect to approximate the democratic ideal of greater voter vigilance of politicians' public behavior that becomes a force for making politicians accountable to deliver on their campaign promises, and to go beyond the personable smile to the reality of improving the quality of the lives of all citizens.

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