

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

The PPSF survey was designed to connect respondents' personality to the quality of their understanding of five different issue areas. As such, the survey contained two key elements. First, is a measure of the Big Five personality traits and, second, a series of in depth questions about five issue areas. These issue areas included (1) food stamps, (2) same-sex marriage, (3) health insurance subsidies, (4) drug testing welfare recipients, and (5) U.S. energy policy. Each of these five issue areas contained questions about (1) the importance of that particular issue area to the respondent, (2) the level of ambiguity contained within respondents' thoughts about the particular area, (3) a factual question about the issue area, (4) at least one subjective question about the issue area, and (5) a question about which political party they felt best handled that particular issue. Finally, the PPSF survey also contained numerous important variables known to contribute to how individuals understand and engage with politics, for example, standard demographic information (age, race/ethnicity, gender, and education), political knowledge, religiosity, partisanship, and ideology. In what follows I document how the survey was administered, explain each of these measures, their specific question wording, and present descriptive statistics on the distribution of respondents in each measure.

SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION

The PPSF survey was designed and hosted using Qualtrics' online survey platform. Sampling was done through Survey Sampling International (SSI). The survey was administered July 8–10, 2014. SSI was founded in 1977 and maintains 34 ongoing panels to form the core of its online sample. Knowing the potential problem with selection bias inherent in an opt-in online survey, SSI improves the quality of its sample by further recruiting participants from online communities, social networks, and websites of all types. In doing so, SSI can potentially reach anyone online through their network of relationships with these online communities, websites, and social media groups. SSI ensures the representativeness of the sample and minimizes the risk of bias through a three-stage randomization process. First, participants are randomly selected from SSI's panels to be invited to take a survey, and these participants are combined with others entering SSI's sampling platform after responding to online messaging (through invitations of all types, including e-mail, SMS, text, telephone, banner ads, and messaging on websites and online communities). Second, a set of profiling questions (never affirmation questions) is randomly selected for them to answer. Third, upon completion, participants are matched with a survey they are likely to be able to take, using a further element of randomization.

For this work, a sample of 2,314 individuals were surveyed. The survey itself is not a representative sample of the U.S. population. A quota system was used to approximate the distribution of U.S. residents in race/ethnicity and gender. Thus, this data is not appropriate for answering questions about the overall U.S. population, such as what percent of the U.S. population is pro same-sex marriage? Or, what percent of the U.S. population is extraverted? These are questions that would require a representative sample of the U.S. population. Of course, here I am interested in understanding the connection between personality and the successes and failures people have understanding and engaging in politics. I cannot think of a confounding variable that might drive this relationship that is associated with the opt-in nature of this survey. That is, a variable that causes someone to be more or less likely to participate in this survey, which also affects the relationship between personality and political successes and failures.

Of course, personality may have an effect on whether one chooses to participate in this survey, but as will be seen, there is still significant variance in each of the Big Five personality traits. For one to make the

claim that the results presented here are biased in some way because of the survey's opt-in nature, they need to show that the variable they surmise is causing participation in the survey (and is biasing results) is related to *both* the dependent *and* independent variables of interests. For example, in [Chapter 2](#), I show that the personality trait “openness to experiences” is positively related to having a liberal ideology. If one wants to claim that this result is caused by the survey's implementation, one needs to show that the variable they claim is causing participation in the survey is driving both the respondent's level of openness to experience and the respondent's ideological liberalness. The vast majority of works in psychology studying personality do not use representative samples of the U.S. precisely because there is, typically, no reason to suspect that the choice to participate in the research is driving the results and the purpose of the research is not to make a claim about the overall population.

SURVEY QUESTIONS AND CODING

Part A: Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI)

In order to measure the Big Five personality traits, I utilized the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) designed by Gosling et al. (2003). This short version of a Big Five personality measure relies on two items to assess personality in each of the Big Five traits. It has been utilized in numerous studies (e.g., Carney et al. 2008; Gerber et al. 2010, 2013a). Ultimately, the TIPI was chosen for the same reason that just about any scholar might choose it rather than the numerous other options. It is short and, therefore, has the ability to fit into a 20-minute survey that also needs to capture numerous other demographic and political variables. It is simply not feasible to include a measure of personality containing fifty to sometimes several hundred questions, when one's entire survey consists of only seventy to eighty questions. For example, the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R) contains 240 questions. While I would have preferred the precision of the NEO PI-R, it is more than three times longer than my entire survey. The TIPI question wording is as follows:

Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please select a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you AGREE or DISAGREE with the statement. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other.

(Traits were presented one at a time in random order, each with the 7 point scale)

- (1) I see myself as: Extroverted, enthusiastic
 - Disagree strongly
 - Disagree moderately
 - Disagree a little
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Agree a little
 - Agree moderately
 - Agree strongly
- (2) I see myself as: Critical, quarrelsome
- (3) I see myself as: Dependable, self-disciplined
- (4) I see myself as: Anxious, easily upset
- (5) I see myself as: Open to new experiences, complex
- (6) I see myself as: Reserved, quiet
- (7) I see myself as: Sympathetic, warm
- (8) I see myself as: Disorganized, careless
- (9) I see myself as: Calm, emotionally stable
- (10) I see myself as: Conventional, uncreative

Each of the Big Five traits was measured with two items.

Extraversion: Extraverted, enthusiastic and Reserved, quite (reversed)

Agreeableness: Sympathetic, warm and Critical, quarrelsome (reversed)

Conscientiousness: Dependable, self-disciplined and Disorganized, careless (reversed)

Emotional Stability: Calm, emotionally stable and Anxious, easily upset (reversed)

Openness to Experience: Open to new experiences, complex and Conventional, uncreative (reversed)

Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.62$

The correlation between each pair of items:

Extraversion = 0.39

Agreeableness = 0.24

Conscientiousness = 0.35

Emotional stability = 0.49

Openness = 0.30

These correlations are in line with previous works and not particularly informative of the items' reliability (see Gerber et al. 2010 footnote 11).

Part B: Five Issue Area Question Sets

The PPSF survey contains five sets of questions corresponding to five different issue areas. These issue areas included (1) food stamps, (2) same-sex marriage, (3) health insurance subsidies, (4) drug testing welfare recipients, and (5) U.S. energy policy. The order in which the issue areas were presented to respondents was randomized. Each issue area contained questions about the importance of the issue to them, a question about how ambivalent their thoughts are about the issue, and a question asking which party is best at handling the issue. The importance questions followed the ANES' template as follows (See ANES Pre-Election Questionnaire):

How important is the issue of _____ to you personally?

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

The ambivalence question follows the work of Feldman and Zaller (1992), Holbrook and Krosnick (2005), Tormala and DeSensi (2008), and Mulligan (2013). Rather than counting the individual positive and negative thoughts about a particular issue (e.g., Lavine et al. 2012), this measure is a single question designed to tap subjective feelings about being pulled in multiple directions on a particular issue. The generic question wording is as follows:

Some people feel that there are only good things or bad things about _____. Their feelings are consistent. Other people feel that there are both good things and bad things about _____. Their feelings are INconsistent. Thinking about your own views, would you say that your feelings about _____ are:

- Extremely consistent
- Very consistent
- Somewhat consistent
- Somewhat INconsistent
- Very INconsistent
- Extremely INconsistent

The generic question asking which party handles each issue also follows ANES' template. The question template is as follows:

Thinking of _____: Which party do you think is best in dealing with it?

(Republican and Democrat were randomized)

- Republican
- Democrat
- Neither
- Don't know

The remaining questions for each issue area contained at least one factual and at least one subjective question. I list each of the remaining questions by issue area.

Drug Testing Welfare Recipients

(Subjective) Should welfare recipients be required to pass a drug test in order to receive benefits, or do you think they should not be tested? (First two options randomized)

- They should be tested
- They should NOT be tested
- Don't know

(Factual) Do you think people who receive some type of welfare assistance are more likely to abuse drugs than the average U.S. citizen? (First two options randomized)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

(Factual) Members of which party are more likely to support requiring drug testing for people receiving welfare? (First two options randomized)

- Republican
- Democrat
- Neither
- Don't know

Healthcare Insurance

Do you currently have health insurance? (First two options randomized)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If respondent answered "yes" to the previous questions, they were asked:

Where do you get your primary health insurance?

- Through my or a family member's employer
- Medicare
- Medicaid
- Health-care exchange setup as part of the Affordable Care Act
- A state health insurance program
- Directly from a health insurance provider
- Other _____

If respondent answered "yes" indicating they had health insurance, they were also asked:

(Factual) Do you get help paying for your Health Insurance by either the state or federal government? (First two options randomized)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

(Subjective) Do you support federal or state government programs designed to help individuals pay for health insurance? (First two options randomized)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Same-Sex Marriage

(Subjective) Should same-sex couples be allowed to marry, or do you think they should not be allowed to marry? (First two options randomized)

- Allowed to marry
- NOT allowed to marry
- Don't know

(Factual) In states where Same-Sex Marriage is legal, can religious organizations like churches or synagogues legally refuse to marry same-sex couples? (First two options randomized)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

(Subjective) Do you think the federal or state governments should make laws regarding who religious organizations can and cannot marry? (First two options randomized)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Energy Policy

(Subjective) Some people feel the USA should dedicate its resources to developing new sources of energy, such as wind and solar, while others feel the USA should dedicate its resources to the production of existing sources of energy, such as oil and coal. Which side do you tend to agree with? (First two options randomized)

- Developing new sources of energy
- Production of existing sources of energy
- Don't know

(Factual) Has U.S. oil production gone up or down since President Obama took office in January of 2009? (First two options randomized)

- Up
- Down
- Don't know

If answered “Don’t know” to previous question, respondent was asked:
What’s your best guess? (Options randomized)

- Up
- Down

Food Stamps

(Factual) About what percent of federal Food Stamp benefits do you think go to individuals living in households that have income from a job? (Open ended)

(Factual) About what percent of federal Food Stamp benefits do you think go to individuals who are working age but do NOT work a paid job and are not living with children, elderly, or disabled individuals? (Open ended)

(Subjective) If you had a say in making up the federal budget this year, for which of the following programs would you like to see spending INCREASED and for which would you like to see spending DECREASED?

Spending on Food Stamps should be . . . (First three options randomized)

- Increased
- Decreased
- Kept about the same
- Don’t know

Part C: Remaining Questions Measuring Important Political Variables

Political knowledge—this is measured following ANES general political knowledge questions. I will just list the topic of the question rather than exact wording here in order to save space. See ANES 2012 pre-election questionnaire for exact wording.

- 1) ID party controlling House of Representatives
- 2) ID party controlling Senate
- 3) Current unemployment rate
- 4) Properly ID Republican Party as more conservative than Democratic Party
- 5) ID John Boehner
- 6) ID Joe Biden
- 7) ID David Cameron
- 8) ID John Roberts

Partisanship—this is measured following ANES question sequence in order to avoid “hidden” partisans (Keith et al. 1992). From this series of questions, one builds the partisan seven point scale.

- 1) Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?
 - Republican
 - Democrat
 - Independent
 - Other party
 - No Preference
 - Don’t know
- 2) If Democrat or Republican selected, ask about strength of connection (i.e., “Strong” or “Not very Strong”).
- 3) If anything besides Dem. or Rep. selected, ask “Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?” with answers:
 - Closer to the Republican
 - Closer to the Democratic
 - Other _____

Ideology—this is measured in two ways, both using ANES standard questions.

Symbolic ideology:

We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. When it comes to politics, do you usually think of yourself as extremely liberal, liberal, slightly liberal, moderate or middle of the road, slightly conservative, conservative, extremely conservative, or haven’t you thought much about this?

- Extremely Liberal
- Liberal
- Slightly Liberal
- Moderate; Middle of the Road
- Slightly Conservative
- Conservative
- Extremely Conservative
- Haven’t thought much about this

Operational Ideology:

The following generic questions setup, with Welfare, Social Security, Public Schools, Science and Technology, Dealing with Crime, Protecting the Environment, and Healthcare used to fill in the blanks. (These were presented in random order)

If you had a say in making up the federal budget this year, for which of the following programs would you like to see spending INCREASED and for which would you like to see spending DECREASED? (First two options randomized)

Spending on _____ should be . . .

- Increased
- Decreased
- Kept about the same
- Don't know

Religious fundamentalism—this is measured using a single General Social Survey (GSS) question (Ellis and Stimson 2012).

Which of these statements comes closest to describing your feelings about the Bible?

- The Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word
- The Bible is the inspired word of God but not everything in it should be taken literally, word for word
- The Bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by men

Interest in politics—measured based on two standard ANES questions. First, “How many days in the past week did you watch news on TV?” and, second, “How many days in the past week have you discussed politics with someone else?” Each question ranges from 0 to 7. These two are then combined with a range of 0–14.

Finally, SSI provided the basic demographic information for each respondent: Age, Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Education. Tables A1 and A2 present descriptive data for each of the variables.

Table A1 Categorical variable descriptive statistics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Percent of total</i>	<i>Regression coding</i>
Race/ethnicity (<i>N</i> = 2,317)		Dummy, Coded 1 if
White	62.24	White, 0 otherwise
African-American	13.16	
Hispanic	17.18	
Asian	6.39	
Other	1.03	
Gender (<i>N</i> = 2,317)		Dummy, Coded 1 if
Female	50.8	Male, 0 otherwise
Male	49.2	
Education (<i>N</i> = 2,255)		7 point scale
Some high school	2.71	corresponding to
High school grad	17.01	the 7 education levels
Some college	28.78	0 = some high school
College grad	29.58	6 = Ph.D., J.D., M.D.
Some post-college grad	4.79	
Master's Degree	13.39	
Ph.D., J.D., M.D.	3.68	
Religious fundamentalism (<i>N</i> = 2,309)		3 point scale
Bible is literal word of God	28.24	0 = Bible fable
Bible is inspired word of God	46.30	2 = literal Bible
Bible is fable, legend, history	25.47	
Partisanship (<i>N</i> = 2,317)		3 dummy variables
Republican	36.34	for each partisan
Democrat	52.70	type.
Independent	10.96	

Note: Not all respondents answered every question, thus the *N* varies for each variable.

Table A2 Continuous variable descriptive statistics

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Big Five					
Extraversion	2,292	5.91	2.80	0	12
Agreeableness	2,303	8.41	2.34	0	12
Conscientiousness	2,296	9.61	2.28	0	12
Emotional stability	2,298	7.98	2.80	0	12
Openness to experience	2,297	8.15	2.43	0	12
Political knowledge	2,317	4.21	2.22	0	8
Ideology					
Symbolic	2,314	-0.05	1.54	-3	3
Operational	2,265	-2.04	2.65	-7	7
Interest in politics	2,297	8.27	3.71	2	16
Age	2,317	46.6	17.4	18	96

Note: Not all respondents answered every question, thus the *N* varies for each variable.

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