



Nursery school personality and political orientation two decades later [☆]

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Abstract

The present study reports on the personality attributes of nursery school children who two decades later were reliably stratified along a liberal/conservative dimension. An unprecedented analytical opportunity existed to evaluate how the political views of these young adults related to assessments of them when in nursery school, prior to their having become political beings. Preschool children who 20 years later were relatively liberal were characterized as: developing close relationships, self-reliant, energetic, somewhat dominating, relatively under-controlled, and resilient. Preschool children subsequently relatively conservative at age 23 were described as: feeling easily victimized, easily offended, indecisive, fearful, rigid, inhibited, and relatively over-controlled and vulnerable. IQ during nursery school did not relate to subsequent liberalism/conservatism but did relate in subsequent decades. Personality correlates of liberalism/conservatism for the subjects as young adults were also reported: conservatives were described in terms congruent with previous formulations in the literature; liberals displayed personality commonalities but also manifested gender differences. Some implications of the results are briefly discussed.

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1. Introduction

Politics is the expression within structured societal arrangements of efforts by people to differentially advance certain value systems. Worldwide, in every country, political views exist that have vast consequences for their country of origin, and often for the very fate of the planet. In this country, in Europe, and in most other parts of the world, views have long evolved to define a political spectrum usefully characterized as ranging from Liberal to Conservative. Neither end of this political continuum is necessarily homogeneous or fully internally consistent. But it has been communicative and simplifying to broadly view political positions in these terms, as does this study.

Psychologists and political scientists long have been drawn to understanding the associations between personality and political persuasion. For early examples, see Fromm (1941), Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford (1950), Rokeach (1960), Christie and Jahoda (1954), Greenstein (1969), and McClosky (1958). Contemporaneity regarding this compelling interest is to be gained from the work of, for example, Altemeyer (1981, 1998), Duckitt (2001), Wilson (1973), Sidanius and Pratto (1999), Stone and Schaffner (1988), and, especially, the recent monumental integrative review on conservatism by Jost, Kruglanski, and Sulloway (2003a, 2003b). As they note, it is an empirical issue whether there are definite connections between intrinsic psychological qualities and the adoption of politically conservative attitudes.

The thrust of the present report is to present an unusual empirical study of the implications of individual character for political orientation—towards liberalism as well as towards conservatism. Although liberalism/conservatism has been generally recognized as connected to concurrent or subsequent behavior, its developmental roots have not previously been accorded research attention if only because there has been little opportunity for studying the early personality *antecedents* of political orientation. Various distal epidemiological factors are about all that have been considered. However, for deep political understanding, it may be critical to inquire how Liberals and Conservatives differ in their early childhood years, *before* they become political beings.

This question provides the primary motivation of the present inquiry. We assess nursery school personality via a laborious method and procedures that are relatively unfamiliar to political scientists and many psychologists but have been repeatedly supported. We also, in the same fashion, evaluate directly and independently the personality characteristics of our subjects as young adults. This analysis reveals support, via a quite different method, for earlier literature findings and, by so doing, therefore lends credence to the findings emerging from the preschool years.

Our analysis is permitted by an intensive and prolonged longitudinal study of personality and cognitive development (Block, 1993; Block & Block, 1980b). When the participants were in nursery school, well-based personality evaluations had been developed of each participant; separately, well-based personality evaluations also were developed when the participants were young adults. Within the confines set by the available sample, two questions are addressed: (1) When the subjects were in their early childhoods, prior to achieving political self-definition, what personality attributes—independently evaluated—relate to their subsequent political orientations as relatively Liberal or Conservative? Excepting certain genetic analyses (about which more later), no previous study has been able to address the question of the provenance from so early an age of subsequent

political orientation. (2) At age 23, what personality attributes—independently evaluated—concomitantly characterize young adults who privately describe themselves as Liberals or Conservatives? This study is enabled to provide unique behavioral information on these intriguing questions.

2. Method

2.1. Subjects

Subjects were participants in the Block and Block Longitudinal Study of Cognitive and Ego Development at the University of California at Berkeley, begun in 1969 (see Block, 1993; Block & Block, 1980b) for comprehensive descriptions of the study.

Subjects initially (about 1969–1971) were attending two different nursery schools and resided primarily in the urban areas of Berkeley and Oakland, California; they were heterogeneous with respect to social class and parents' educational level. At age 23 (about 1989), 104 of the original 128 subjects were intensively assessed. Of these, usable data for the present analyses were available for 95 subjects, 49 females, and 46 males.

2.2. Establishing a conceptually tenable and reliable index of LIB/CON

Political orientation represents a *domain* of attitudes, preferences, and behaviors rather than simply a single, presumed sufficient measure. As presumed relevant indicators of this domain, seven different political measures were employed when the participants were age 23, administered over the course of several weeks by different examiners:

1. Participants self-identified their position on a 5-point continuum ranging from “very liberal,” “liberal,” “middle of the road,” “conservative,” to “very conservative.” No reliability estimate could be calculated for these liberalism/conservative Ideological Self-ratings but test–retest correlations of similar measures attest to the dependability of such measures.
2. Participants indicated their direction of agreement regarding 10 issues generally viewed as then distinguishing the Democratic and Republican parties: abortion rights, amount of money spent on welfare, national health insurance, income tax rates, environmental protection, affirmative action, extent of funding for national defense, support of use of military force to remove a hostile foreign government, government job guarantees, and civil rights for suspected criminals. The α reliability of this measure was .63.
3. Participants indicated their position regarding Political Rights (via an updated version of McClosky's Dimensions of Political Tolerance approach (1958)): 12 stands were taken regarding freedom of political expression (e.g., flag-burning, TV appearances of Nazi and Ku Klux Klan), opposition to various kinds of censorship (of books in high school libraries, of speakers), the right to remain silent, etc. The α reliability of this measure was .54.
4. Participants expressed their attitude, on a 6-point scale, toward the 15 items of the Kerlinger Liberalism Scale (1984), concerned with such ultimately political symbolic issues as civil rights, racial equality, socialized medicine, social planning, labor unions, equality of women, the United Nations, and so on. The α reliability of this measure was .82.

5. Participants expressed their attitude, on a 6-point scale, toward the 15 items of the [Kerlinger Conservatism Scale \(1984\)](#), concerned with such ultimately political symbolic issues as patriotism, religion, social stability, capitalism, government price controls, law and order, moral standards, and so on. The α reliability of this measure was .87.
6. Participants were questioned regarding their personal Political Activism, whether the subject had written letters to express political views, attended political rallies or demonstrations, or boycotted companies and products singled out as politically averse. A 3-item scale resulted for which the α reliability was .56.
7. Participants responded to the Political Information Scale, a 10-item measure of the extent of knowledge of the positions of the Democratic and Republican Parties (see 2, above). The α reliability of this measure was .71.

Via conceptual analysis, further supported by empirical factor analysis, the first 6 measures proved convergent and were separated from the seventh, amount of political information. A composite score, termed LIB/CON, for each participant was then generated by averaging the standard scores of the 6 convergent variables. The α (lower bound) reliability of this composite measure was .73. The measure, because it is based on diverse political indices each broadly conceived as conceptually relevant, may be presumed to have a larger representativeness of the liberalism/conservatism construct than any of its components.

The LIB/CON score distribution in this sample leans toward liberalism, with relatively few participants tilting toward conservatism. However, the crucial composite score, on which all data analyses are based, displays a wide, albeit somewhat skewed, distribution. To the extent there is skew, it follows that individuals toward the Conservative end of the score distribution can be expected to be characterologically more homogeneous than individuals toward the Liberal end.

2.3. Evaluating personality during the nursery school years, two decades earlier

During their nursery school years in the longitudinal study, the age 23 participants had been closely evaluated. Each child at age three was assessed by three experienced, independently functioning nursery school teachers each of whom had seen the child daily for seven months before offering their separate, well-versed evaluations. At age 4, and when in a second nursery school for seven months, each child was independently assessed again by an entirely different set of three experienced nursery school teachers functioning independently. The nursery school teachers had been selected by the nursery school head and tended to be graduate students from the University of California School of Education. The nursery school context was socializing-emphasizing and somewhat permissive, not unusual then.

Evaluations of each child were encoded by means of the California Child Q-set (CCQ) ([Block & Block, 1980a](#)), a carefully evolved, widely ranging set of statements describing a child's personality-cognitive-social characteristics. It requires knowledgeable assessors to each provide comprehensive character descriptions of a child in a conceptually systematic, quantifiable, and commensurate form. Beyond provision of the 100 CCQ-items and technical instruction as to how to employ the CCQ-set, there were no further instructions regarding the cast of the required personality formulations. In other research contexts, CCQ personality descriptions have proven empirically generative in many ways, relating in numerous and implicative ways to later and other criteria

(cf., e.g., Block, Block, & Harrington, 1974; Block, Block, & Keyes, 1988; Block & Gjerde, 1986; Block, Gjerde, & Block, 1991; Block & Block, 1980b; Block, Block, & Morrison, 1981; Buss, Block, & Block, 1980). For a general treatment of the rationale and methodology of this assessment procedure, consult Block (1961).

Each assessor independently evaluated the salience for a child of each of the 100 CCQ-set items or variables by placing them into a fixed, quasi-normal distribution using nine categories—from not at all characteristic or negatively salient to highly characteristic or positively salient of the child being described. The three independent CCQ assessments of a child at age 3 were averaged, as were the three CCQ assessments of each child at age 4.

For each child, the two averaged CCQ composites were, in turn, pooled to establish even more stable CCQ characterizations. On psychometric grounds, these pooled evaluations may be presumed to have a greater nomothetic validity than the validity of any of the separately offered Q-sorts. It is the pooled Q-sort descriptions that were used in the present analyses. Obviously, these earlier nursery school evaluations, stored for 20 years, were independent of the later-achieved LIB/CON scores.

2.4. Evaluating personality of the subjects during young adulthood

At age 23, the personality characteristics of each participant were independently described by six entirely different psychologists in a similar way, this time using the standard vocabulary and methodology of the long-established California Adult Q-set (CAQ) (Block, 1961).¹ The CAQ also consists of a carefully evolved, widely ranging set of statements about an adult's personality-cognitive-social attributes. It also requires apprehending psychologists to each provide comprehensive character descriptions in a conceptually systematic, quantifiable, and commensurate form. The CAQ methodological approach to personality description also has repeatedly demonstrated its usefulness and nomothetic validity in diverse research contexts (cf., e.g., Block, 1971; Block et al., 1974; Block et al., 1991; Block & Robins, 1993; Funder & Block, 1989; Mischel, Shoda, & Peake, 1988).

The six psychologist assessors (doctorates and experienced graduate students in clinical and personality assessment) had each separately and independently observed and interacted with the participants. The assessment contexts differed for the different psychologists. Three were primarily involved in prolonged in-depth clinical interviews, each with a different focus (on attachment, ego development, and early memories). The remaining three psychologists formulated CAQ assessments based on subject behavior observed over several hours while administering different varieties of experimental and situational procedures, both formal and informal, designed to tap various aspects of psychological functioning. Beyond provision of the 100 CAQ-items and technical instruction as to how to employ the CAQ-set, there were no further instructions regarding the psychological content of their personality formulations. All psychologists discharged their assessment responsibilities long prior to the calculation of the LIB/CON index scores of the young men and women.

Each judge independently evaluated the salience for a participant of each of the 100 CAQ-set variables by placing them into a fixed, quasi-normal distribution using nine

¹ At age 14, considered a transitional age between childhood and adulthood, the participants were evaluated by both the CAQ and the largely homologous California Child Q-set (CCQ), a Q-set version earlier deemed more appropriate for children. There was most impressive correspondence between the CAQ and the CCQ at this age and therefore only the results surrounding the CAQ are reported here.

categories—from not at all characteristic or negatively salient to highly characteristic or positively salient of the participant being described. The six formulations available for each participant were then averaged to create a pooled or composite judgment for each subject. On psychometric grounds, these composites may be presumed to have a greater validity for each subject than the validity of any of the separately offered Q-sorts. These composite Q-sort descriptions were then used in the present analyses.

The internal consistency reliabilities of the CAQ-variables, based on correlations among observers, averaged .70. This reliability information not only provides important information about the degree of consensuality among the personality assessors separately contributing these data, but also places perspective on the possible magnitude of correlations that can be expected when these personality measures later were related to the LIB/CON index.

2.5. Evaluating IQ and social class

During the longitudinal course of this study, IQ was evaluated at age 4, age 11, and age 18, thus permitting consideration of the shaping or evolving role of intelligence on later LIB/CON. At age 4, the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI) was administered; at age 11, the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) was employed, and at age 18, the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) was used.

Social economic status (SES) for the mothers and fathers was ascertained by means of the widely used Duncan Index (Duncan, 1961) when the children were age 3.

3. Data analysis

The participants' LIB/CON index scores at age 23 were correlated—for the genders *separately*—(1) with their CCQ item values gathered 20 years earlier, (2) with their concurrent observer-based age 23 CAQ item values, (3) with their sequentially acquired IQ measures, and (4) with the SES indices of their parents during the nursery school years. All score distributions were *continuous*. In the analyses, therefore, the presence of intermediate LIB/CON scorers effectively weakens the relationships that would be observed if only extreme scores on LIB/CON had been contrasted. Positive correlations connote Liberalism; negative correlations connote Conservatism. The findings are inundating and suggestive; they are listed below.

(1) The CCQ correlates of the age 23 LIB/CON index for the male sample when in nursery school are reported in Table 1A, along with—for convenience—the corresponding correlations of these same CCQ items for the female sample when in nursery school. In Table 1B, the CCQ correlates of the LIB/CON index for the female sample, again along with the corresponding correlations of these same CCQ items for the male sample are reported. To heighten the statistical power of the research analysis and help protect against Type II errors, all findings reaching at least the .10 significance level are reported.

Twenty years earlier, the personality qualities characterizing subsequent Liberals and Conservatives are surprisingly numerous and coherent, especially for nursery school girls. Even after the inevitable attenuation of measurement and the diverse influences of intervening life, a psychological internal consistency filters through.

Thus, the relatively Liberal young men, when in nursery school two decades earlier, impressed nursery school teachers as boys who were: resourceful and initializing, autonomous, proud of their blossoming accomplishments, confident and self-involving. The relatively Conservative young men, when young boys, were viewed in nursery school as: visibly deviant,

Table 1

CCQ liberalism—conservatism correlates: (A) Nursery school boys, (B) nursery school girls

(A) CAQ Number		Boys (<i>N</i> =46)	Girls (<i>N</i> =49)
36	Is resourceful in initiating activities	.33*	.26*
83	Seeks to be independent and autonomous	.32*	.35*
16	Proud of accomplishments	.31*	-.09
88	Is self-reliant, confident	.27*	.27*
74	Becomes involved in what s/he does	.26*	.11
27	Is visibly deviant from peers	-.37*	.06
77	Appears to feel unworthy	-.35*	-.17
72	Has a readiness to feel guilty	-.34*	-.24*
60	Anxious in unpredictable environment	-.30*	-.35*
79	Suspicious, distrustful of others	-.30*	-.03
24	Tends to brood and ruminate or worry	-.29*	-.07
39	Immobilized when under stress	-.27*	-.30*
78	Is easily offended	-.25*	-.14
(B) CAQ Number		Girls (<i>N</i> =46)	Boys (<i>N</i> =46)
84	Is a talkative child	.40*	.17
93	Behaves in a dominating manner	.39*	.01
18	Expresses negative feelings openly	.37*	.15
69	Is verbally fluent	.37*	.15
80	Teases other children	.37*	-.13
83	Seeks to be independent and autonomous	.35*	.32*
82	Is self-assertive	.34*	.23
11	Attempts to transfer blame to others	.32*	-.17
85	Is aggressive (physically or verbally)	.32*	-.01
47	High standards of performance for self	.30*	.14
61	Tends to be judgmental of others	.29*	-.04
81	Can admit to own negative feelings	.29*	.20
37	Likes to compete	.28*	.13
68	High intellectual capacity	.28*	.22
40	Is curious and exploring	.27*	.19
88	Is self-reliant, confident	.27*	.27*
21	Tries to be the center of attention	.26*	.07
36	Is resourceful in initiating activities	.26*	.33*
57	Tends to dramatize, exaggerate mishaps	.24*	.01
58	Is emotionally expressive	.24*	.14
53	Indecisive and vacillating	-.46*	-.22
100	Is easily victimized by other children	-.40*	-.21
35	Is inhibited and constricted	-.39*	-.22
8	Keeps thoughts, feelings, to self	-.38*	-.23
1	Prefers non-verbal communication	-.37*	-.13
59	Is neat and orderly in dress	-.37*	.08
98	Is shy and reserved	-.37*	-.19
60	Anxious in unpredictable environment	-.35*	-.30*
44	tends to yield and give in	-.34*	-.18
62	Is obedient and compliant	-.34*	-.02
39	immobilized when under stress	-.30*	-.27*
23	Is fearful and anxious	-.29*	-.22
71	Looks to adults for help and direction	-.26*	-.07
46	Tends to go to pieces under stress	-.24*	-.00
72	Has a readiness to feel guilty	-.24*	-.34*
86	Likes to be by him/herself	-.24*	-.08
33	Cries easily	-.24*	-.07

**p*<.10.

feeling unworthy and therefore ready to feel guilty, easily offended, anxious when confronted by uncertainties, distrustful of others, ruminative, and rigidifying when under stress.

Relatively Liberal young women, as identified via the LIB/CON Index, 20 years earlier were evaluated in nursery school by a coherent host of qualities: self-assertiveness, talkativeness, curiosity, openness in expressing negative feelings and in teasing, bright, competitive, and as having high standards. The relatively Conservative young women, as young girls in nursery school two decades earlier, impressed the then assessors as: indecisive and vacillating, easily victimized, inhibited, fearful, self-unrevealing, adult-seeking, shy, neat, compliant, anxious when confronted by ambiguity, and fearful.

The discriminating CCQ-items in Tables 1A and B are diverse and overwhelming; they warrant an effort at conceptual integration. It has long been recognized that the Q-sort approach offers an unusual way—through what has been called *prototype analysis*—of consolidating into conceptual language the many diverse CCQ-items that empirically arise, as in the present instance. To implement this procedure, a personality construct must first be reliably described in prototypic terms, via a Q-sort array expressing a construct in archetypal or paradigmatic form. Subsequently, the Q-prototype may be correlated with the Q-sort of an actual subject. To the extent they are similar, that construct can be viewed as typifying that individual. This method has been earlier described (Block, 1961) and frequently employed to objectify Q-study interpretations (e.g., Funder & Block, 1989; Gramzow, Sedikides, & Panter, 2004; Reise & Wink, 1995).

In the present study, prototype scores for each subject were generated from long-existent Under-controlled and Ego-resiliency CCQ prototypes (Block & Block, 1980b). By degree of Ego-control is meant the extent to which an individual expresses (under-controls) or constrains (over-controls) his behavior; by degree of Ego-resiliency, is meant the extent to which an individual is dynamically resourceful in his adaptations. The constructs have received much articulation and research over the years.

For the girls when in nursery school, subsequent LIB/CON correlated .48 with the CCQ Under-controlled prototype and .36 with the CCQ Ego-Resilience prototype. For the boys, the corresponding correlates with adult LIB/CON were .32 and .36 for the CCQ UC and ER prototypes. These are highly significant relationships and testify to the early implications of under-control and resiliency for subsequent liberalism as compared to conservatism 20 years later.

(2) The CAQ correlates of the LIB/CON index for the young men are reported in Table 2A along with, for immediate comparison, the corresponding correlation for these same CAQ items for the young women. In Table 2B, the CAQ correlates of the LIB/CON index for the young women along with the corresponding correlations for these same CAQ items for the young men are reported. Again, to heighten the statistical power of the research analysis, all findings reaching and going beyond the .10 significance level are reported.

Quite definite, somewhat similar, but also somewhat different personality portraits emerge as characterizing the two genders as young adults.

At age 23, relatively Liberal young men are characterized as: introspective, life contemplative, esthetically responsive, bright, complicating of the simple, with wide interests, and relatively non-conforming. Young men scoring as relatively conservative on the LIB/CON Index proved to be independently evaluated by the various assessors as: conservative, uneasy with uncertainty, conventional and sex-typed both in their own behavior and in their social perceptions, moralistic, and proffering of unasked-for advice.

Table 2

CAQ correlates of liberalism—conservatism: (A) Young men, (B) young women

(A) CAQ Number		Men (<i>N</i> = 46)	Women (<i>N</i> = 49)
16	Is introspective, concerned w/self	.52*	.17
90	Concerned w/philosophical problems	.44*	-.06
66	Enjoys aesthetic impressions	.40*	.32*
8	Has high degree of intellectual capacity	.39*	.29*
60	Has insight to own needs, motives	.37*	.19
51	Genuinely values intellectual matters	.32*	.17
87	Complicates simple situations	.30*	.19
3	Has a wide range of interests	.28*	.30*
57	Is an interesting, colorful person	.28*	.36*
62	Tends to be rebellious, non-conforming	.27*	.24
7	Favors conservative values	-.51*	-.55*
9	Uncomfortable with uncertainty	-.45*	-.49*
93	Behaves in sex-typed manner	-.38*	-.37*
63	Judges self, others in conventional terms	-.37*	-.33*
95	Tends to proffer advice	-.32*	-.01
41	Makes moral judgments	-.31*	-.31*
89	Compares self to others	-.28*	-.06
91	Is power oriented	-.28*	-.07
(B) CAQ Number		Women (<i>N</i> = 49)	Men (<i>N</i> = 46)
44	Evaluates the motives of others	.39*	.04
64	Perceptive of interpersonal cues	.38*	.07
57	Is an interesting, colorful person	.36*	.28*
98	Is verbally fluent	.35*	.16
66	Enjoys aesthetic impressions	.33*	.40*
3	Has wide range of interests	.30*	.28*
8	Has high degree of intellectual capacity	.29*	.39*
1	Is critical, not easily impressed	.27*	.23
99	Is self-dramatizing; histrionic	.27*	.03
58	Enjoys sensuous experiences	.26*	.18
15	Is skilled in social techniques	.25*	.11
32	Seems aware of impression made on others	.24*	.00
62	Tends to be rebellious, non-conforming	.24*	.27*
7	Favors conservative values	-.55*	-.51*
9	Uncomfortable with uncertainty	-.49*	-.45*
93	Behaves in sex-typed manner	-.37*	-.38*
97	Is emotionally bland	-.35*	-.14
63	Judges self, others in conventional terms	-.33*	-.37
33	Is calm, relaxed in manner	-.32*	-.02
77	Appears straightforward, candid	-.32*	-.06
41	Is moralistic and self-righteous	-.31*	-.31*
70	Behaves in ethically consistent manner	-.29*	.02
31	Regards self as physically attractive	-.28*	-.12

**p* < .10.

At age 23, relatively Liberal young women are assessed independently as: vital, motivationally aware, perceptive, fluent, bright, with extensive and esthetic interests, somewhat non-conforming. Relatively Conservative young women were characterized as: conservative, uneasy with uncertainties, conventional, as sex-typed in their personal behavior and social perceptions, emotionally bland, appearing calm, and candid but also somewhat moralistic.

The Conservative young men and women are assessed as having quite similar character qualities. Both sexes are conservative, are made uneasy by ambiguity, are traditional in their views of sex-typing. But the young Conservative men, perhaps as a function of self-ascribed conceptions of masculinity, are oriented more toward issues of possessing potency—they tend to compare self with others, make moral judgments, offer unrequested advice. The young Conservative women appear to lean heavily on societal proprieties as guides to behavior.

Liberal young men and women are both bright, with wide and complex interests, and tend toward non-conformity. However, for the men, intelligence appears to be directed inward, complicating and deepening their existential understandings of life while for the women, intelligence seems directed toward social engagement and escaping from passivity.

(3) It is of interest to note that the LIB/CON score does *not* relate to intelligence (WPPSI IQ) at age 4 for either boys or girls (r 's of .07 and .01). However, LIB/CON correlates positively with intelligence in the following decade for both boys and girls. WISC IQ at age 11 correlates with LIB/CON .30* and .28*, and WAIS IQ at age 18 correlates .36* and .24* for boys and girls, respectively. These evolving relationships may be consequential upon further development, and divergence, of the subjects.

Further, LIB/CON does not correlate consequentially with mother's SES either for boys or for girls at age 3 (.17 and .07). With Father's SES, LIB/CON correlates .28* for boys and .20 for girls at age 3.² Regarding the implications of SES during the cultural era involved, responsibility for the care and socialization of very young children was then primarily a full-time maternal responsibility, with fathers usually being minimally involved temporally and therefore with relatively little opportunity in those early years to influence child development.

Because child IQ in nursery school displays no relationship with subsequent LIB/CON and because when the children were in nursery school, maternal SES displayed no relation to later subject LIB/CON while paternal SES was likely not an appreciable child-developing influence, these early parental variables are not further considered.

(4) As ancillary support of the adult CAQ findings, we report an entirely different, and more usual, source of information—questionnaires or self-report. Vis-a-vis the well-respected Tellegen Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) (Tellegen, 1985a, 1985b; Tellegen et al., 1988), the personality implications of the LIB/CON score receive further support. It correlates appreciably *negatively* with the MPQ Control scale (−.48** and −.41**, for the young men and young women, respectively) and correlates *negatively* with MPQ Traditionalism (−.33** and −.37**)—both scales central to Tellegen's primary Constraint (versus expressiveness) factor. With his intriguing MPQ Absorption dimension (relating to what may be called “perceptual impulsivity” or “sensitivity to one's surround”), LIB/CON correlates a conceptually supportive .48** for girls. Vis-à-vis questionnaire scales of the present authors (Funder & Block, 1989), LIB/CON and Ego-under-control correlate .55** for young men and .24 for young women. Lib/CON and Ego-resiliency correlate an inconsequential .20 for young men and .11 for young women. Interestingly, vis-a-vis self-evaluated self-esteem (the extent to which one's self-evaluation corresponds with one's ego-ideal (Block & Robins, 1993)), LIB/CON shows no relation, with correlations of −.03 and .01.

² Partialling of Fathers SES from the CCQ data resulted in losing sample size but still showed the kind of pattern seen in the unpartialled analysis.

4. Discussion

In developing perspective on the findings, one should first bear in mind three considerations—the nature of the sample, the logical design of the study, and a fuller perspective on correlation coefficients.

- *The nature of the sample.* The sample, born in the late 1960s and achieving young adulthood about 1990, grew up in Berkeley and Oakland, an enveloping cultural context appreciably different from much of America—a factor that should be taken into account. Widely and properly perceived as reflecting liberal, even sometimes extreme left political views, the San Francisco Bay Area provides a context that unsurprisingly and unembarrassedly encourages liberalism and looks askance at much of conservatism. Accordingly, it is understandable that, in its entirety, the present sample as young adults is liberally oriented. However, and of course, any sample bias carries no implication whatsoever regarding analyses of individual differences conducted *within* the sample.

- *The logical design of the study and the nature of the data.* The personality evaluations developed and filed away two decades earlier and developed anew when the participants were young adults were formulated completely independently of the age 23 LIB/CON scores. In no way, during the nursery school personality evaluations or the age 23 personality evaluations, were political issues raised with the subjects or with the assessors involved in the individual assessments.

As frequently noted, traditionally employed self-report measures of conservatism may sometimes unacceptably confound personality factors with ideological persuasion. However, it is difficult to contemplate how the apolitical nursery school assessments in this study might be subject to a confounding of personality and ideological stances, as elsewhere has been argued (e.g., Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986).

Moreover, the sexes were analyzed separately, so that a form of replication exists. To the extent the findings for the two sexes converge (and in important respects they so appear), the reported findings appear most persuasive, especially with regard to the Conservative end of the LIB/CON continuum. And where they also interestingly diverge, they may be portraying implicative gender differences. Certainly, generalization of these findings to other kinds of populations remains an appreciable question but the internally consistent findings derived *within* the present sample we suggest are simply difficult to discount.

- *A fuller perspective on correlation coefficients.* Although the correlations reported here are typical of what is usually reported in empirical studies, many readers may be unaware of the statistical conditions influencing the values or sizes of obtained correlations. However, it is important to be aware of the extent several factors may constrain obtained findings, separately and conjointly.

Thus, investigators rarely recognize or acknowledge the extent to which attenuation inevitably lowers a correlation due to measure unreliability, often appreciably (Block, 1963). Separately, there can be a further lowering of a correlation when the two distributions being related are discordantly shaped, as is frequently the case (Carroll, 1961). When it is further recognized that multiple influences on a variable usually exist, it follows that when specifically focusing upon a particular and solitary influence, the potential value of the consequent correlation is severely restricted because much explainable variance continues to be absorbed by other, still unconsidered influences (Ahadi & Diener, 1989). The frequent presence of range restriction, as in the college samples so often employed, also may limit the correlations obtained (McNemar, 1964). Given widespread inattention to the sum

and interaction of ever-present attenuation effects, the frequent discordancy of distribution shapes, the competing presence of multiple but unemphasized influencing factors, and the unacknowledged frequent usage of homogenous samples, it is not surprising that obtained correlations may not impress uncontextualizing researchers. We suggest that, given the above recognitions, the relationships reported here may be viewed as worthy of respect.

4.1. Some implications of the results

A first reaction is *res ipse loquitur*, the thing speaks for itself. The analyses are straightforward, logically compelling, and unique; no similar longitudinal studies of the behavioral characteristics of individuals later stratified with respect to liberalism/conservatism appear to exist.

The concurrent, age 23 personality characteristics associated with the LIB/CON index are of serious interest and implication. Considering first the adult conservatives in this study, the constellation of associated personality characteristics is remarkably similar across both genders. Both sexes, separately evaluated, are viewed as conservative, uncomfortable with uncertainty, conventional, traditionally sex-typed, constricted in their behaviors, judging self against conformist norms, and moralistic. The young men also display an egocentric self-image, with an orientation toward the virtues of power, a willingness to offer advice, and a concern about their status within the pecking order. This configuration of personality characteristics, although methodologically based on quite different procedures, is especially reminiscent of earlier speculations by Fromm (1941), the Berkeley studies of the authoritarian personality (Adorno et al., 1950), Rokeach (1960), and Altemeyer (1981), among others. Providing additional conceptual and informational support for the present findings, is the attractive recent review by Jost et al. (2003b). The congruence between our findings regarding adult conservatives and prior empirically based understandings attests to the general representativeness of the present sample as adults and, therefore, the likely veridicality of the unique nursery school results. It warrants mention, though, that in this particular sample and for males only, there is only slight indication of the Social Dominance Orientation that also has been noted as contributory to conservatism Sidanius and Pratto (1999).

In the literature, there seems to have been much less psychological speculation and research on the personality attributes influencing liberalism. For adult liberals in this study, the constellation of personality characteristics, although somewhat similar for the two sexes, also differs as a function of gender. The young men and women are alike in being bright, distinctive, having a wide range of interests, being aesthetically responsive to the world about them. They appear welcoming of change, easily cast off the usual, and they trend toward non-conformity. But they also differ in that the young men are relatively introspective, reflective about existential problems, and intellectually oriented; the young women, on the other hand, are more interpersonally oriented, perceptive of others and socially instrumental, aware also of sensuality.

Shifting now to the nursery school findings, the conservatives of both genders were characterized by their then teachers in psychologically unflattering terms but more markedly for little girls than for little boys. Both genders were viewed as uncomfortable with uncertainty, as susceptible to a sense of guilt, and as rigidifying when experiencing duress. The nursery school boys subsequently conservative were especially viewed as deviant from their peers and sensitive to being different. The nursery school girls subsequently

manifesting conservatism displayed various internalized premises and constricted behaviors. They tended toward indecisiveness, were easy butts of peers, and were quiet, neat, compliant, fearful and tearful, hoping for help from the adult surround.

The liberals of both genders, during the years they were in nursery school, were characterized by their then teachers by a nucleus of similar terms. Both sexes were viewed as resourceful, autonomous, expressive, and self-reliant. The subsequently liberal boys were perhaps a bit more manifest in their pride and activity involvement. The subsequently liberal girls were further characterized as talkative and dominating, aggressive and teasing, brightly fluent, with high standards, and judgmental of peers. These unusual data cleanly reveal in these samples of young women and young men an undeniable linkage between early childhood character structure and much later adult orientation toward political issues and political choices. It would appear that early identifiable personality characteristics, stemming from constitutional origins always interweaving with the cultural surround, seem to influence an approach to the world and a reaction to the world that tends, over the years, to evolve into a worldview, a *weltanschauung*, on a wide variety of issues, many of them political.

Invoking our own theoretical parlance, and with regard to the present sample, during their earlier nursery school years, female Conservatives may be viewed as trending substantially toward over-control (Block, 2002; Block & Block, 1951, 1952; Block & Block, 1980b), as tending toward uncertainty, constriction, and compliance, becoming—usually—followers rather than leaders in their social settings. Reciprocally, our female Liberals when in nursery school appear inclined toward under-control, manifesting an independence of evaluations, an expressiveness, and a relative unconstraint by others. In adulthood, these now women still trend toward under-control. The male sample when in nursery school appears relatively resilient and tilted toward under-control. In adulthood, these now men have become aware of the troubling complexity and complications of life; they are still described as somewhat resilient and under-controlled but not markedly so.

Why will the psychological characteristics of over-controllers often influence them to gravitate toward the politically conservative? As suggested here by our findings and earlier intimated in previous political writings, timorous conservatives of either gender tend to be easily rattled by uncertainty (and always there can be the *feeling* of uncertainty) and therefore will feel more comfortable and safer with already structured and predictable—therefore traditional—environments; they will tend to be resistant to change toward what might be self-threatening and forsaking of established modes of behavior; they will be attracted by and will tend to support decisive (if self-appointed) leaders who are presumed to have special and security-enhancing knowledge.

Conversely, why will under-controllers of either gender tend toward the more politically liberal? Given their personal proclivities toward uncommon perspectives of possibility, an appetite for novelty, and their easier expression of impulse, they will often encounter in the everyday world constraints and frustrations that do not appear to be sensibly or societally required. As a first line of adaptive reaction, they will wish these constraints removed or the world rearranged to be less frustrating. Various justifications, not necessarily narrowly self-serving, will be confidently brought forward in support of alternative political principles oriented toward achieving a better life for all (Block, 1972; Block, Haan, & Smith, 1969). Ironically, the sheer variety of changes and improvements suggested by the liberal-minded under-controller may explain the diffuseness, and subsequent ineffectiveness, of liberals in politics where a collective single-mindedness of purpose so often is required.

4.2. On the heritability of political orientation

A number of studies have appeared in the last decades testifying to the “heritability” of political orientation (see, e.g., Bouchard, Lykken, McGue, Segal, & Tellegen, 1990; Bouchard et al., 2003, 2004; Eaves & Eysenck, 1974; Eaves, Martin, Meyer, & Corey, 1999; Martin et al., 1986; Tesser, 1993). Employing a statistical approach to evaluate the extent to which behavior is heritable, these studies have issued results indicating an inborn basis for political attitude. Of course, the ultimate necessity is understanding the *interplay* of genes and experience.

Regarding the provenance in our subjects of the findings presented here, there must remain uncertainty. Certainly, there is no gene per se for liberalism/conservatism. But one can envisage the genetic inheritance in an individual of personality characteristics predisposing him toward particular perceptual and action tendencies. Dynamically interplaying with such genetic tendencies are experiential factors such as parenting chronicities and the larger cultural surround. The sample under study is not opportune for closer analysis along these lines since, by the time of nursery school when they were first encountered, the children have already fused genetic and environmental factors. So, the etiology of our findings must remain moot.

However provenance-evaluated, the present findings may have tapped into some important aspects of liberalism/conservatism. The study is too limited by itself to admit of extensive efforts at rationalization of the dynamics between personality and political persuasion. But the present findings may contribute toward a context for understanding that will be deeper psychologically and politically.

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