’Cause You’ve Got Personality: Political Participation and the Tendency to Join Civic Groups

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Abstract
The integration of the Big Five personality traits into models of political participation represents an important advance in the political behavior literature. However, because national surveys that include political and personality measures are not widespread, such analyses have been limited in number. In addition, there have been inconsistencies within and across studies on personality and participation. The availability of more data make it possible to compare the performance of personality measurement batteries across recent political surveys, reexamine hypotheses about the link between personality and participation, test the explanatory power of personality across samples and in different contexts, and expand measures of political and civic engagement, all of which I do in this article. Personality traits do influence political participation, although the magnitude and direction of effects depend on the particular act. Extraversion has a consistent effect on participation, but the effects of Agreeableness, Openness, Conscientiousness, and Emotional Stability are much less consistent.

Keywords
personality, political participation, civic engagement, political psychology; political behavior

Introduction
Recently, political scientists have begun to integrate measures of personality into models of political participation, with the Big Five traits gaining much attention. The integration of the Big Five into individual-level models of political and civic engagement represents an important advance in the literature. Indeed, although classic studies of participation speculated that some people might participate in social and political activities simply “because it is their nature to do so,” this idea has received little attention until now (Sobel, 1993, p. 345). Verba and Nie (1972), for instance, pointed out that there was a “participation proneness” among some people (p. 194). In addition, Brady, Verba, and Schlozman (1995) observed that some people have a “taste for participation” (p. 278). In short, political scientists are starting to take more seriously the idea that some people might be more inclined to participate in politics because they have “got personality,” to borrow a line from Lloyd Price’s (1959) song (You’ve Got) Personality.

In this article, I provide an examination of the link between the Big Five personality traits and various acts of political participation and civic engagement. My analysis proceeds in a straightforward manner and makes several contributions to the literature. First, I provide an overview of previous findings on the link between the Big Five and acts of political and civic participation. Although recent studies on the Big Five and participation (Gerber, Huber, Doherty, Dowling, et al., 2011; Mondak, 2010; Mondak, Hibbing, Canache, Seligson, & Anderson, 2010) have provided a solid basis for understanding the association between personality traits and political participation, there have been inconsistencies within and across studies that deserve further inquiry. When contradictory findings emerge, additional tests of the hypotheses should be conducted. Mondak et al. (2010) make strong case for reexamining hypotheses, noting that “if similar findings emerge in independent analyses conducted with different datasets and different Big Five instruments, confidence rightly will grow in the identified effects” (p. 19). Gerber et al. (2011), too, encourage further research on the association between the Big Five and political participation, pointing out that “extending our work to other electoral contexts is warranted” (p. 704). Second, because more political surveys have started to include personality measures, it is possible compare the performance of personality measurement batteries across surveys. Doing these things will help us accumulate a body of evidence regarding the relevance of personality to political and civic participation. Throughout this article, I use cross-sectional data from the U.S. portion of

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the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey to test hypotheses about how the Big Five personality traits influence political participation and civic engagement. In addition to providing new evidence on the association between the Big Five and acts that have been explored in previous studies, I expand measures of political and civic engagement by examining how personality traits shape the tendency to join civic groups, an activity that has long been thought to be important to the formation of social capital (Putnam, 2000), and to partake in protests.

Overview of Emerging Research on Big Five and Participation

Existing studies in political science and psychology have provided detailed accounts of the history and development of the Big Five personality traits (see Gerber et al., 2011; John & Srivastava, 1999; Mondak, 2010). Rather than providing an in-depth overview of the Big Five, I simply note that the Big-Five framework is a hierarchical model of personality traits with five broad factors, which represent personality at the broadest level of abstraction. Each bipolar factor (e.g., Extraversion vs. Introversion) summarizes several more specific facets (e.g., Sociability), which, in turn, subsume a large number of even more specific traits (e.g., talkative, outgoing). The Big-Five framework suggests that most individual differences in human personality can be classified into five broad, empirically derived domains. (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003, p. 506)

The Big Five traits are as follows: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Emotional Stability. John and Srivastava (1999) have provided a nice description of each of the five factors:

Extraversion implies an energetic approach to the social and material world and includes traits, such as sociability, activity, assertiveness, and positive emotionality. Agreeableness contrasts a prosocial and communal orientation toward others with antagonism and includes traits, such as altruism, tender-mindedness, trust, and modesty. Conscientiousness describes socially prescribed impulse control that facilitates task- and goal-directed behavior, such as thinking before acting, delaying gratification, following norms and rules, and planning, organizing, and prioritizing tasks. Emotional Stability describes even-temperedness and contrasts . . . with negative emotionality, such as feeling anxious, nervous, sad, and tense . . . Openness to Experience (versus closed-mindedness) describes the breadth, depth, originality, and complexity of an individual’s mental and experiential life. (p. 121)

With this in mind, I focus on outlining commonalities and inconsistencies within and across recent studies on personality and participation in the United States.

Although research has examined the influence of personality on political and civic engagement in Italy (Vecchione & Caprara, 2009), Canada (Blais & Labbé-St-Vincent, 2011), the Netherlands (Bekkers, 2005), South Korea (Ha, Kim, & Jo, in press), and Uruguay and Venezuela (Mondak, Hibbing, Canache, Seligson, & Hibbing, 2011), few studies have been conducted using U.S. data (see Gerber et al., 2011; Mondak, 2010; Mondak & Halperin, 2008; Mondak et al., 2010). In large part, this stems from the fact that “datasets on political participation that include measures of personality remain rare” (Mondak et al., 2011, p. 211). This is especially true of data sets that use national samples.

In one of the first studies on personality and political participation in the United States, Mondak and Halperin (2008) introduced the Big Five to the political behavior literature. They used three surveys conducted on local samples to examine how the Big Five influence political attitudes, evaluations, opinions, and several acts of political participation. Mondak and Halperin found that Openness, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Emotional Stability were not consistently related to the acts of political participation they consider. Extraversion, however, was strongly related to a variety of acts of political participation that entail social interactions.

Building on the work of Mondak and Halperin (2008), Mondak et al. (2010) examined the link between the Big Five and a range of dependent variables, including social network size, campaign participation indices, and numerous traditional participatory acts like turning out to vote. They used data from the 2006 Congressional Elections Study (CES), a national sample, but also used data collected from Venezuela and Uruguay. Similar to Mondak and Halperin, Mondak et al. (2010) found that Extraversion was strongly related to participation in campaign activities that entail social engagement but that it was not related to voter turnout. Mondak et al. (2010) found little evidence of a link between Agreeableness and political participation. Their analysis did suggest that Openness is positively related to a number of acts, including voting, contacting a public official, attending a public meeting, working for a party or candidate, putting up a yard sign or displaying a sticker or button, and donating money. Finally, Conscientiousness is negatively related to a range of acts, including contacting a member of Congress, attending a meeting with a member of Congress, and working for a party or candidate, whereas Emotional Stability is inconsistently related to acts of political participation.

Mondak (2010) provided a similar analysis to that of Mondak et al. (2010), but used two local surveys and the 2006 CES to examine the link between the Big Five and participation in politics. He found that Extraversion was consistently related to contacts with elected officials, with the other components of the Big Five showing modest effects. Extraversion was also a strong predictor of engagement in campaign acts that entail social interactions, which is very much in line with previous studies. Openness, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Emotional Stability were inconsistently related to participation in campaign activities that entail social interactions. Like Mondak et al.
(2010), Mondak found very little association between the Big Five and voter turnout.

The most recent analysis of the Big Five and political engagement in the United States comes from Gerber et al. (2011), who used data from the 2007-2008 Cooperative Campaign Analysis Project (CCAP) and from a survey conducted in the state of Connecticut. These scholars examined the influence of personality on overreporting turnout, validated voter turnout, and several national and local participation indices.² They found that extroverts vote more often than introverts, which contradicts Mondak and Halperin (2008) and Mondak et al. (2010), whereas conscientious individuals vote less often than their counterparts. Mondak et al. (2010) found a negative association between Conscientiousness and turnout, but the effect was not statistically significant (as it is in Gerber et al.’s study). The negative association between Conscientiousness and turnout is a bit surprising given the tendency of conscientious people to follow norms and traditions. In addition, unlike Mondak et al. (2010) who found that Emotional Stability had a negative and statistically significant effect on voter turnout, Gerber et al. found that Emotional Stability had a positive and significant effect on turnout. Gerber et al. found that Emotional Stability was positively related to a national participation index but only in one of their samples (the national sample). Beyond turnout, Gerber et al. found that the Big Five are relevant to a number of national and local political participation indices. Consistent with previous studies, there is a strong, positive relationship between Extraversion and the breadth of political participation. Openness is also positively related to political participation. The performance of Conscientiousness varies across Gerber et al.’s (2011) data sets, with significant effects showing up in one sample (negative and statistically significant effect in national sample) but not in another (the Connecticut sample). A summary of the results from previous studies on the Big Five traits and political participation in the United States can be found in Table 1.

Although the literature on personality and mass political behavior is only just beginning to take shape, the few existing studies have demonstrated that investigating the link between personality and political participation in the U.S. context is a fruitful endeavor. The inconsistencies that exist within and across studies, however, highlight the fact that further research is needed to parse out just how personality affects engagement. Given the variability of some of the findings in existing research, some people may be skeptical of the link between personality traits and participation. The fact that most political surveys do not contain personality measures has limited the extent to which scholars have been able to examine and reexamine the link between the Big Five and participation. The ability to generalize, however, rests on the ability to replicate findings across different data sets. Thus, it is important to continue to study the link between the Big Five traits and participation. In addition, the influence of personality on some measures of political and civic engagement has not been examined in the United States. Most notable is the role of personality in shaping the decision to join with others in civic groups. It appears that deep-seated characteristics influence the intensity of psychological attachments to groups (e.g., partisanship), but little political science research has been done on the association between personality attributes and joining civic groups (Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2012; Settle, Dawes, & Fowler, 2009). Given the differing nature of political and civic activities, it is important to consider the influence of personality on a broad range of participatory acts as possible. Personality attributes may be related to different acts in theoretically interesting ways.

**Expectations**

Although I am interested in the extent to which personality traits influence the breadth of political and civic engagement because the characteristics of political acts vary, I follow previous research (Mondak et al., 2010) and examine the influence of the Big Five personality traits on specific acts of political and civic engagement. The effects of the Big Five, which capture different elements of personality, are likely to depend on the act being investigated. Gerber et al. (2011) and Mondak et al. (2010) provide some support for this idea.

In this article, I am interested not only in traditional acts of political participation but also in acts of civic engagement and unconventional participatory acts. Because I am using the attributes of participatory acts to theorize about which personality factors will be relevant, it is important to note that as dependent variables I am interested in the following acts: voter turnout, how frequently a respondent tries to convince others how to vote during election times, whether a respondent worked for a party or candidate in 2008, whether a respondent has protested or participated in a demonstration in the past 12 months, whether a respondent has attended a local government meeting in the past 12 months, how often a respondent has tried to help to solve a problem in their community or neighborhood, the number of times a respondent has contacted the government, and, finally, the number of civic groups or organizations that each respondent is affiliated to.³ Following Gerber et al. (2011), I also create indices measuring the extent to which people partake in national and local political life. The construction and coding of all participation measures is described in a section that follows.

Overall, the personality factor that is most obviously linked to social and political activity is Extraversion. Following previous research (Gerber et al., 2011; Mondak, 2010), I expect that Extraversion will be most strongly related to acts that entail social interaction. People who are extroverts tend to be active, sociable, and talkative. These are the people who do not mind sharing their ideas and being visible in public settings. Because people who are extraverted are also characterized as being expressive, extroverts...
| Study                                      | Extraversion                                                                 | Openness                                                                 | Agreeableness                                                  | Conscientiousness                                                  | Emotional Stability                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mondak and Halperin (2008)                | Sample A: Turnout (ns); Rallies (+); Wear Button (ns); Volunteer (ns).       | Sample A: Turnout (ns); Rallies (ns); Wear Button (ns); Volunteer (ns). | Sample A: Turnout (−); Rallies (ns); Wear Button (ns); Volunteer (ns). | Sample A: Turnout (ns); Rallies (ns); Volunteer (ns).               | Sample A: Turnout (ns); Rallies (ns); Volunteer (ns).               |
|                                           | Sample B: Turnout (ns); Rallies (+); Sample C: Attend Meeting (+); Speak at Meeting (+); Sign Petition (+); Contact Officials (+); Contact Editor (+). | Sample B: Turnout (ns); Rallies (ns); Sample C: Attend Meeting (ns); Speak at Meeting (+); Sign Petition (ns); Contact Officials (+); Contact Editor (ns). | Sample B: Turnout (ns); Rallies (ns); Sample C: Attend Meeting (+); Speak at Meeting (ns); Sign Petition (ns); Contact Officials (+); Contact Editor (+). | Sample B: Turnout (ns); Rallies (ns); Sample C: Attend Meeting (ns); Speak at Meeting (ns); Sign Petition (ns); Contact Officials (+); Contact Editor (ns). |
|                                           | Sample A: Turnout (−); Rallies (ns); Wear Button (ns); Volunteer (ns).       | Sample A: Turnout (ns); Rallies (ns); Wear Button (ns); Volunteer (ns). | Sample A: Turnout (−); Rallies (ns); Wear Button (ns); Volunteer (ns). | Sample A: Turnout (ns); Rallies (ns); Volunteer (ns).               | Sample A: Turnout (−); Rallies (ns); Volunteer (ns).               |
|                                           | Sample B: Turnout (ns); Rallies (ns). Sample C: Attend Meeting (−).          | Sample B: Turnout (ns); Rallies (ns). Sample C: Attend Meeting (−).      | Sample B: Turnout (−); Rallies (ns); Sample C: Attend Meeting (−). | Sample B: Turnout (−); Rallies (ns); Sample C: Attend Meeting (−). | Sample B: Turnout (−); Rallies (ns); Sample C: Attend Meeting (−). |
| Mondak (2010)                             | Number of times contact officials (+); Contact in past 2 years (+); Attend meeting with member of Congress (+); Convince (ns); Work for Party (+); Attend Meeting (+); Sign/ Sticker/Button (ns); Money to Party or Candidate (ns); Money to Group (ns); Turnout 1998 (ns); Turnout 2006 (ns) | Number of times contact officials (+); Contact in past 2 years (+); Attend meeting with member of Congress (ns); Convince (+); Work for Party (+); Attend Meeting (ns); Sign/ Sticker/Button (ns); Money to Party or Candidate (ns); Money to Group (ns); Turnout 1998 (−); Turnout 2006 (ns) | Number of times contact officials (ns); Contact in past 2 years (−); Attend meeting with member of Congress (−); Convince (−); Work for Party (−); Attend Meeting (ns); Sign/ Sticker/Button (ns); Money to Party or Candidate (−); Money to Group (−); Turnout 1998 (−); Turnout 2006 (−) | Number of times contact officials (−); Contact in past 2 years (−); Attend meeting with member of Congress (−); Convince (−); Work for Party (−); Attend Meeting (−); Sign/ Sticker/Button (−); Money to Party or Candidate (−); Money to Group (−); Turnout 1998 (−); Turnout 2006 (−) |
| Mondak, Hibbing, Canache, Seligson, and Anderson (2010) | Turnout (ns); Contact Officials (+); Attend Meeting (+); Work for Party (+); Rallies (+); Wear Button (ns); Donate (ns) | Turnout (+); Contact Officials (+); Attend Meeting (+); Work for Party (+); Rallies (+); Wear Button (+); Donate (+) | Turnout (ns); Contact Officials (ns); Attend Meeting (ns); Work for Party (−); Rallies (ns); Wear Button (ns); Donate (−) | Turnout (−); Contact Officials (−); Attend Meeting (−); Work for Party (−); Rallies (−); Wear Button (−); Donate (−) | Turnout (−); Contact Officials (−); Attend Meeting (−); Work for Party (−); Rallies (−); Wear Button (−); Donate (−) |
| Gerber et al. (2011)                      | Sample A: Turnout (+); Donate (+); Wear Button (+); Rallies (+); Sample B: Turnout (+); Donate (+); Volunteer (+); Rallies (+); Contact Officials (+); Attend Meeting (+); Speak at Meeting (+) | Sample A: Turnout (−); Donate (−); Wear Button (−); Rallies (−); Sample B: Turnout (−); Donate (−); Volunteer (−); Rallies (−); Contact Officials (−); Attend Meeting (−); Speak at Meeting (−) | Sample A: Turnout (−); Donate (−); Wear Button (−); Rallies (−); Sample B: Turnout (−); Donate (−); Volunteer (−); Rallies (−); Contact Officials (−); Attend Meeting (−); Speak at Meeting (−) | Sample A: Turnout (−); Donate (−); Wear Button (−); Rallies (−); Sample B: Turnout (−); Donate (−); Volunteer (−); Rallies (−); Contact Officials (−); Attend Meeting (−); Speak at Meeting (−) |

Note. (+) means statistically significant positive relationship (p < .1, two-tailed), (−) means statistically significant negative relationship (p < .1, two-tailed), and (ns) means statistically insignificant relationship (p > .1, two-tailed).
should be willing to engage in acts that allow them to express their opinions even if the acts are performed in more exclusive settings, such as voting.

Consistent with Gerber et al. (2011), I expect that Openness will be particularly relevant to acts where people have the potential to encounter ideas that are counter to their own or to encounter new or stimulating ideas/activities. People who score highly on the Openness factor tend to be open to new experiences and ideas and, thus, are unlikely to be offended when they encounter opposing viewpoints. They also tend to like the cognitive stimulation that comes from learning about new perspectives or ideas and from the exchange of information. Finally, people who score highly on the Openness factor may be more inclined to engage in less conventional acts than their counterparts simply because they are more open to new ideas, some of which may be untraditional (Mondak et al., 2011).

Although the theoretical links between Extraversion, Openness, and political engagement are fairly easy to identify, the relevance of Agreeableness to participation is not immediately obvious. Fortunately, the psychology and political science literature on Agreeableness offers some useful guidance. Gerber et al. (2011) note, for instance, that because Agreeable people tend to shy away from conflict, they may dislike politics and avoid participation altogether. Given the prevalence of conflict in national politics, this realm may be particularly unappealing. Although Agreeable people tend to dislike conflict, they also tend to be cooperative, trusting, and helpful. Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, and Knafo (2002) note that this trait “is highly compatible with the motivational goal of benevolence values—concern for the welfare of people with whom one has personal contact” (p. 792). Thus, Agreeableness might have a positive effect on participation in community affairs, where it may be easier to identify the effects of participation on the community. Community activities that do not entail a lot of conflict, like participation in civic groups, may be particularly appealing to people high on Agreeableness. Civic groups and clubs are typically united around the pursuit of a common mission or goal and are unlikely to entail a high degree of internal conflict. Indeed, the literature on social capital indicates that individuals often join with like-minded people in civic groups (Norris, 2002). The bridges between individuals of different groups, backgrounds, ideologies, and beliefs are where conflicts are most likely to be observed when it comes to group interactions (Norris, 2002).

The theoretical link between Conscientiousness and political engagement is not immediately clear. And, as I noted above, the empirical evidence on the relationship between this trait and participation is mixed. Although one might think that because Conscientiousness is associated with following norms, rules, and traditions, people high on this trait would be more likely to participate in politics, especially voting, which is commonly viewed as a social norm or duty. Interestingly, previous scholars have found mostly negative effects when it comes to this trait, presumably due to the consideration of instrumental benefits (see Gerber et al., 2011; Mondak, 2010). Thus, it would not be surprising if there were negative effects between Conscientiousness and the acts of participation considered here.

The final component of the Big Five, Emotional Stability, is perhaps the most difficult personality factor to link to political participation, although previous scholars have made a plausible case for the political relevance of this trait. In general, emotionally stable individuals tend to be calm, self-assured, adaptive, not anxious, not tense, and not easily upset. There are several reasons why Emotional Stability might be related to political participation, given the characteristics of this personality factor. For instance, because people who are Emotionally Stable tend to be self-confident, they may be more willing to act on their political beliefs. This would explain the positive effect of Emotional Stability on voter turnout identified by Gerber et al. (2011). It may also be the case that people who are better equipped to deal with anxiety, stress, and conflict will be more likely to engage in politics, a realm where challenging opinions, uncertainty about the outcomes of political contests, and conflicts are ubiquitous (Gerber et al., 2011).

Given the general discussion of personality traits and participation above, and the fact that there are 5 personality traits and 10 measures of participation in the present study, I provide a summary of how each factor should be related to the acts described above in Table 2. As a brief overview, I expect that Extraversion will be related to all of the participatory...
acts outlined above but that it will have the largest effect on acts that entail social interaction. Extroversion should be a particularly strong predictor of the number of civic groups a person affiliates with because this is a highly social activity. To assess the magnitude of the effects for each personality factor, I analyze the marginal effects of personality below.

Openness should be positively related to all acts, but should have the strongest effect on acts where people have the potential to encounter opposing viewpoints or stimulating experiences, such as convincing someone how to vote or volunteer. Although working for a candidate or party does involve being surrounded by like-minded volunteers, people are likely to learn new information as they work with others and are likely to encounter opposing ideas or resistance as they engage in acts like making phone calls, knocking on doors, attending events, or distributing information. At the very least, working for a candidate or party is likely to be a stimulating experience and should, therefore, be enjoyable to someone high on the Openness factor. Openness should also have a positive influence on the propensity that someone takes part in a protest or demonstration. Protest is a relatively unconventional means of exerting political influence and may be more appealing to those who are more open. Openness should also have a positive influence on the propensity to join others in civic groups. Although, as I noted above, such groups are often homogeneous, which makes them less likely to spur conflicting viewpoints, they also involve an exchange of ideas that might appeal to those high on the Openness factor.

When it comes to Agreeableness, I expect mostly negative effects due to the conflictual nature of many political acts, but I hypothesize that there will be a positive relationship when the act is community-oriented and not conflictual. Agreeable individuals should be more inclined to participate in civic groups and organizations than their counterparts because such groups often engage in community activities, like planning church picnics, making improvements to the local school, or raising money for charities, and are likely to appeal to the generous nature of those high on Agreeableness. Such groups tend to be homogeneous, which means that conflict may be low, and this should also appeal to Agreeable people. To the extent that people believe that their political volunteering is done for the benefit of others (to elect a candidate or party that advances the public interest), there may be a positive relationship between the Agreeable trait and volunteering to work for a party or candidate.

When it comes to Conscientiousness, I expect mostly negative effects, given previous research on this trait and the nature of Conscientious people. The expectation for the act of voting is unclear, though. Although Gerber et al. (2011) find a significant and negative effect when it comes to voting (Conscientious people are less likely to vote), others have found nonsignificant effects. It is likely that Conscientious people, who tend to be traditional, will stay away from unconventional acts like protesting.

Finally, although previous research has yielded mixed results for Emotional Stability, the theoretical argument and empirical evidence from Gerber et al. (2011) about the positive relationship deserves further inquiry, especially, in light of Mondak et al.’s (2010) finding of a negative effect from this trait. According to Gerber et al. (2011), Emotional Stability should be positively related to various acts of participation because people with high scores on this trait tend to be self-assured, confident, and not prone to anxiety or agitation.

Data

The data used in this article come from the U.S. portion of the 2010 AmericasBarometer, which was conducted by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP). LAPOP conducts surveys in countries across Latin America and also field surveys in the United States in some years. The survey was in the field from March 17 to 29 of 2010 and was conducted by YouGov/Polimetrix. In total, 1,687 respondents were interviewed and were matched down to a sample of 1,500.4 The matched set of survey respondents was then weighted to known marginals for the general population of the United States from the 2006 American Community Survey. The 2010 U.S. survey included measures of the Big Five along with a variety of questions about political and civic engagement. To my knowledge, this survey has not yet been used to study the link between the Big Five and participation.

Measuring Personality and Comparing Measures Across Political Surveys

To measure the Big Five, I make use of a 10-item Big Five personality inventory, which has become a common way to measure the Big Five in psychology and political science (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003). Although measures collected from longer inventories tend to have more desirable statistical properties than those collected from short ones, 10-item batteries actually perform quite well (e.g., in terms of test–retest reliability, correlation with peer reports of personality, correlation with longer batteries, etc.), given their brief nature. To measure personality traits, respondents were given the following statement:

Here are a series of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Using the 1-7 ladder, where 1 means “strongly disagree” and 7 means “strongly agree,” please tell me the number that indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with that 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.

Two adjective pairs were presented for each of the five factors. The adjective pairs for each of the Big Five were as

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Table 3. Correlation Between Components of Big Five Across three Studies.

| Personality trait     | 2010 data set components                  | Pearson’s $r$ (2010 data) | Pearson’s $r$ (Gerber et al., 2011) | Pearson’s $r$ (Mondak, 2010) |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Extraversion          | Sociable, active Quiet, shy               | .34                       | .43                                 | .53                         |
| Agreeableness         | Critical, quarrelsome Generous, warm     | .14                       | .25                                 | .47                         |
| Conscientiousness     | Dependable, self-disciplined Disorganized, careless | .37                       | .38                                 | .29                         |
| Emotional Stability   | Anxious, easily upset Calm, emotionally stable | .43                       | .49                                 | .43                         |
| Openness              | Open to new experiences, intellectual Uncreative, unimaginative | .27                       | .28                                 | .28                         |

Note. All correlations are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

follows: for Extraversion (sociable and active; quiet and shy—reverse coded), for Agreeableness (critical and quarrelsome—reverse coded; generous and warm), for Conscientiousness (dependable and self-disciplined; disorganized and careless—reverse coded), for Emotional Stability (calm and emotionally stable; anxious and easily upset—reverse coded), and for Openness (open to new experiences and intellectual; uncreative and unimaginative—reverse coded). Each component was recoded to range from 0 to 1. The two trait pairs were then summed together and resulting variables were standardized to run from 0 to 1.

Before reexamining the relationship between personality and political and civic engagement using the AmericasBarometer survey, I provide a brief analysis of how Big Five measurement batteries compare across three national data sets (the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey, 2006 CES, and 2007-2008 CCAP), each of which was collected during a different year and context. Although Gerber et al. (2011) note that “researchers should be sensitive to the consequences of using different personality batteries for predicting political outcomes,” little attention has been devoted to comparing the different measurement batteries that have been included in political surveys to one another or to examining differences across studies. In Table 3, I provide the correlations between the two components for each of the Big Five traits. The first column shows the correlations using the 2010 survey data discussed above; the second column shows the correlations reported by Gerber, Huber, Doherty, and Dowling (2011), who use the 2007-2008 CCAP; and the third column shows the correlations reported by Mondak (2010) and Mondak et al. (2010), who use the 2006 CES. All three of these surveys use 10-item inventories but use slightly different component items.5

Although there is some variance in the correlations across surveys, many of the correlations are of similar magnitude, just as we would expect. The most similar correlations across studies are the items measuring Openness, Emotional Stability, and Conscientiousness. The most different correlations across studies are the items measuring Extraversion and Agreeableness. The two components measuring Extraversion in the 2010 survey used here (sociable, active; quiet, shy) correlate at a respectable .34, but correlate at even higher levels ($r = .43$) in the Gerber et al. (2011) study (which uses extraverted, enthusiastic; reserved, quiet) and in the Mondak (2010) study ($r = .53$; which uses extraverted, introverted; outgoing, shy). The different correlations that exist between the 2010 data and the other two studies might be attributable to the fact that both the Mondak study and the Gerber et al. study use an item that explicitly includes the term extraverted. Perhaps this item serves as a better indicator of the Extraversion factor than “sociable, active,” which was used in the 2010 survey. Future studies should administer the different trait measures used in the above studies to the same sample to examine which traits serve as better indicators—in terms of measurement properties—of each personality factor.

The correlations for Agreeableness are the most variable. In the 2010 survey, the correlation between the two items (critical, quarrelsome; generous, warm) is $r = .14$. Mondak’s (2010) components (sympathetic, unsympathetic; kind, unkind), however, correlate much more strongly ($r = .47$). The correlation for the Agreeableness items (sympathetic, warm; critical, quarrelsome) reported by Gerber et al. (2011) is in the middle at .25.

Analysis and Results
Before moving forward with the statistical analyses, it is important to note that descriptive statistics for the Big Five traits, along with the dependent and control variables, are provided in Table 4.

In Table 5, I present a series of Poisson, logistic regression (logit), and ordered logit models to examine how personality influences political and civic engagement. Ordered logit models are used in the two models where the dependent variables measure the extent to which a respondent tries to convince others how to vote during election times (4-point ordinal scale) and how frequently a respondent tried to help
to solve a problem in their community or neighborhood in the past 12 months (4-point ordinal scale). These variables are coded so that higher values reflect more frequent engagement. Poisson models are used when the dependent variables count the number of national and local acts one partakes in, the times a respondent has contacted the government to help solve a community problem, and the number of civic groups or organizations a respondent associates with. Although the civic groups measure is highly correlated with a general political participation index (\(r = .57, p < .05\)), it is worthwhile to examine the extent to which personality influences the propensity to join with others in civic groups or organizations. Participation in civic groups provides us with an additional measure of participation that entails a high degree of social interaction. In addition, participation in civic groups is likely to occur even when elections are not happening and, thus, serves as a nice compliment to measures of participation during electoral periods. The rest of the dependent variables are dichotomous and are coded so that 1 corresponds to performing the act and 0 corresponds to not performing the act.

Each model includes a compliment of relevant controls, including variables for race, education level, income, age, age squared, and respondent sex, which have been included in most previous models of political participation and turnout and perform largely as expected. Across almost all of the models, for example, those with higher levels of education are more likely to engage in political or civic activities. At the outset, it is worth noting that Wald tests were conducted to evaluate whether the Big Five personality factors were jointly equal to zero. In all of the models, the tests were statistically significant. Thus, the included personality traits do significantly improve the explanatory power of the models. The results of these tests are shown at the bottom of Table 5.

The first model in Table 5 uses a standard national political participation index as the dependent variable (ranges from 0 to 4 and is made up of voting, convincing, volunteering, and demonstrating). The second model uses a local participation index (ranges from 0 to 2 and is made up of attending a local meeting and helping to solve a local problem). Interestingly, several of the personality factors are statistically significant (\(p < .05\)) predictors of the extent to which people participate in political life. Unsurprisingly, those who score highly on Extraversion participate in a greater number of political acts than their counterparts. Extraversion is statistically significant in the local and national participation models. This is consistent with Gerber et al. (2011) and Mondak et al. (2010). The only other significant relationships are Conscientiousness (negative effect in national model) and Emotional Stability (negative relationship in the local model). The negative relationship between Conscientiousness and participation indicates that those who are more Conscientious by nature are less likely to partake in national politics and does match the negative relationship found by Gerber et al. (2011) and Mondak et al. (2010) when Conscientiousness was used to predict a

| Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for All Variables, 2010 U.S. AmericasBarometer Data. |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Variable        | M               | SD              | Minimum         | Maximum         |
| Extraversion    | 0.625           | 0.224           | 0               | 1               |
| Agreeableness   | 0.731           | 0.170           | 0.167           | 1               |
| Conscientiousness| 0.806           | 0.171           | 0.25            | 1               |
| Emotional Stability | 0.704      | 0.205           | 0               | 1               |
| Openness        | 0.800           | 0.170           | 0.167           | 1               |
| National index  | 1.851           | 0.930           | 0               | 4               |
| Local index     | 0.409           | 0.635           | 0               | 2               |
| Turnout         | 0.863           | 0.344           | 0               | 1               |
| Convince        | 2.386           | 1.079           | 1               | 4               |
| Volunteer       | 0.141           | 0.348           | 0               | 1               |
| Protest         | 0.134           | 0.341           | 0               | 1               |
| Local meeting   | 0.255           | 0.436           | 0               | 1               |
| Contact government | 0.741         | 1.045           | 0               | 3               |
| Solve local problem | 1.657        | 0.820           | 1               | 4               |
| Civic groups    | 1.606           | 1.466           | 0               | 5               |
| Black           | 0.114           | 0.318           | 0               | 1               |
| Hispanic        | 0.128           | 0.334           | 0               | 1               |
| Other race      | 0.071           | 0.257           | 0               | 1               |
| Education       | 3.246           | 1.479           | 1               | 6               |
| Income          | 4.969           | 2.831           | 1               | 10              |
| Age years       | 48.420          | 15.964          | 18              | 89              |
| Age squared     | 2,599.205       | 1,539.447       | 324             | 7,921           |
| Male            | 0.476           | 0.500           | 0               | 1               |
Table 5. Influence of Personality on Political and Civic Engagement, 2010 U.S. AmericasBarometer Data.

| Variables | National Turnout | Local Turnout | Convince Volunteer | Protest Local meet | Contact Solve Groups |
|-----------|------------------|---------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
|           | Poisson          | Poisson       | Logit               | Ordered logit      | Logit               | Logit               | Logit               | Poisson Ordered logit Poisson |
|           | b (SE)           | b (SE)        | b (SE)              | b (SE)            | b (SE)              | b (SE)              | b (SE)              | b (SE) b (SE)          |
| Extraversion | 0.496 (0.093)*   | 1.247 (0.307)* | 1.207 (0.405)*     | 1.414 (0.562)*    | 2.338 (0.628)*      | 2.145 (0.449)*      | 1.531 (0.567)*      | 0.857 (0.251)* 1.646 (0.409)* 0.774 (0.174)* |
| Agreeableness | −0.127 (0.135)   | 0.039 (0.412)  | −0.928 (0.605)     | −0.349 (0.526)    | −0.009 (0.769)      | −0.082 (0.596)      | −0.023 (0.693)      | 0.461 (0.354) 0.667 (0.559) 0.187 (0.262) |
| Conscientiousness | −0.505 (0.137)*  | −0.157 (0.371) | −0.206 (0.538)    | −1.984 (0.518)*   | −2.256 (0.822)*     | −1.735 (0.569)*     | 0.270 (0.643)      | −1.074 (0.318)* −0.231 (0.505) 0.183 (0.244) |
| Emotional Stability | −0.099 (0.110)   | −0.666 (0.498) | −0.351 (0.434)    | −1.026 (0.644)    | −0.542 (0.489)      | −0.447 (0.508)      | −0.883 (0.286)*     | −0.106 (0.430)* −0.194 (0.204) |
| Openness   | 0.097 (0.123)    | 0.068 (0.417)  | 0.047 (0.566)      | 1.302 (0.471)*    | 2.099 (0.951)*      | 1.021 (0.642)      | 0.653 (0.661)       | 0.483 (0.364) −0.485 (0.518) −0.080 (0.242) |
| Black      | −0.092 (0.063)   | 0.069 (0.198)  | 0.485 (0.275)      | −0.409 (0.245)    | −0.014 (0.392)      | −0.975 (0.368)      | −0.477 (0.332)      | −0.202 (0.187) 0.205 (0.260) 0.058 (0.125) |
| Hispanic   | −0.024 (0.066)   | −0.199 (0.229) | −0.286 (0.218)     | −0.147 (0.238)    | 0.185 (0.370)       | −0.296 (0.281)      | −0.876 (0.352)*     | −0.433 (0.204)* −0.150 (0.263) −0.226 (0.131) |
| Other race | 0.002 (0.068)    | 0.303 (0.175)  | 0.131 (0.335)      | 0.246 (0.314)     | −0.300 (0.457)      | 0.624 (0.262)*      | 0.129 (0.329)       | −0.101 (0.221) 0.598 (0.279)* 0.220 (0.112) |
| Education  | 0.101 (0.012)*   | 0.136 (0.038)* | 0.787 (0.106)*     | 0.343 (0.052)*    | 0.322 (0.079)*      | 0.106 (0.057)       | 0.140 (0.060)*      | 0.147 (0.033) 0.195 (0.052)* 0.062 (0.022)* |
| Income     | 0.013 (0.007)    | 0.006 (0.020)  | 0.034 (0.033)      | 0.073 (0.026)*    | 0.047 (0.042)       | 0.039 (0.028)       | 0.053 (0.034)       | 0.001 (0.019) 0.009 (0.027) 0.028 (0.012)* |
| Age        | 0.004 (0.007)    | −0.005 (0.021) | 0.098 (0.031)*     | −0.012 (0.027)    | −0.034 (0.041)      | 0.017 (0.032)       | 0.002 (0.035)       | 0.039 (0.022) −0.026 (0.027) 0.29 (0.013)* |
| Age squared | 0.000 (0.000)   | 0.000 (0.000)  | 0.000 (0.000)      | 0.000 (0.000)     | 0.000 (0.000)       | 0.000 (0.000)       | 0.000 (0.000)       | 0.000 (0.000) 0.000 (0.000)* 0.000 (0.000)* |
| Male       | 0.106 (0.037)*   | 0.453 (0.124)* | 0.469 (0.182)*     | 0.346 (0.143)*    | −0.056 (0.240)      | 0.809 (0.179)*      | 0.937 (0.204)*      | 0.208 (0.108) 0.395 (0.163)* 0.180 (0.075)* |
| Constant   | 0.114 (0.185)    | −1.947 (0.645)* | −3.517 (0.785)*   | −3.515 (1.302)*   | −3.456 (0.920)*     | −3.828 (1.054)*     | −1.735 (0.656)*     | −1.163 (0.413)*     |

Number of Observations 732 727 1,462 733 733 1,461 729 725 727 718
Pseudo-R² .030 .050 .240 .070 .100 .090 .100 .060 .030 .040
Joint Big Five test 40.790 4.550 16.550 35.290 24.100 33.470 16.380 36.030 20.310 27.010

Note. The number of observations decreases in some models because some of the participation questions were only asked to half of the sample. Cut points not shown for ordered models to save space. Full results for ordered models can be obtained from the author upon request.*Statistically significant at the p < .05 level (two-tailed tests).
Table 6. Marginal Effects From Models.

| Independent variables | National | Local | Turnout | Conv. | Volun. | Protest | Local meeting | Contact | Solve | Groups |
|-----------------------|---------|-------|---------|-------|-------|---------|---------------|---------|-------|--------|
| Baseline prob./count  | 1.79    | .36   | .93     | —     | .11   | .11     | .22           | .67     | —     | 1.52   |
| Extraversion          | .20     | .10   | .02     | .04   | .05   | .05     | .06           | .13     | .05   | .26    |
| Agreeable             | -.04    | .00   | -.01    | .01   | .00   | .00     | .00           | .05     | .01   | .05    |
| Conscientious         | -.15    | -.01  | -.01    | .04   | -.04  | -.03    | .01           | -.12    | .00   | .05    |
| Emotional Stability   | -.04    | -.05  | -.01    | .01   | -.02  | -.01    | -.02          | -.12    | .03   | -.06   |
| Openness              | .03     | .00   | .00     | .03   | .03   | .02     | .02           | .06     | .01   | -.02   |
| Education level       | .27     | .07   | .08     | .06   | .05   | .01     | .04           | .15     | .04   | .14    |

Note. This table shows the baseline probability/count of engaging in each act along with the proportional changes relative to the baseline probability/count for a two standard deviation increase for each independent variable. For ordered logit models (convince and solve problem), the cells show the average change (across the four categories) for a two standard deviation increase for each independent variable. All other variables set to their means in each equation.

I begin by focusing on the role of Extraversion in shaping each participatory act. As expected, Extraversion is statistically significant ($p < .05$) in all of the models, although the magnitude of the effects varies. Although extroverts are more likely than their counterparts to engage in acts that entail social interaction, they also engage in the more reclusive act of voting. This is consistent with Blais and Labbé-St-Vincent’s (2011) finding that shy people are less likely to vote, and with Gerber et al.’s (2011) similar finding that Extraversion is positively related to validated voter turnout. Presumably, this is because extroverts tend to be expressive and want to articulate their ideas, beliefs, and values broadly. In Table 6, I present the marginal effects of each personality variable and education—of the most consistently important determinants of participation. The table shows the proportional changes relative to the baseline probability/count for a two standard deviation increase for each of the independent variables listed. Although the effect of Extraversion on turnout is fairly small (+2%, but still statistically significant), Extraversion has the largest effect on the more social acts included in Table 2, such as working for a party or candidate (+5%), convincing others how to vote (+4%), protesting (+5%), and attending a local meeting (+6%). The influence of Extraversion on the number of civic organizations that a respondent affiliates with is particularly impressive (.26) and even exceeds the influence of education (.14), a classic predictor of civic and political engagement. Holding all variables constant at their mean values, a person with the lowest score on Extraversion is predicted to participate in less than one civic group or organization. Moving to the highest level of Extraversion, however, increases the predicted number of civic groups or organizations to just over two. The performance of the Extraversion factor nicely comports with the theoretical expectations outlined above.

In contrast to Extraversion, which was statistically significant in all models, the Agreeableness trait is never statistically significant. This is consistent with Mondak et al.’s finding that across 10 participation models Agreeableness was never a statistically significant predictor. When coupled with the results from previous studies, it appears that Agreeableness does not have a particularly important direct influence on political participation or civic engagement. In the future, one potential way to further explore the relationship between Agreeableness and participation would be to examine the extent to which facets of this trait (compliance, generosity, etc.) are related to participation. When the two Agreeableness traits (critical, quarrelsome; generous, warm) are entered into the models shown in Table 2 separately (along with the other four personality measures and controls) rather than as a combined measure, a number of interesting patterns emerge (results not shown, but available from the author upon request). In many cases, the coefficients on these items travel in opposite directions. For instance, the “critical, quarrelsome” trait is negatively signed and statistically significant ($p < .10$) in the protest model, indicating that people who are less critical and quarrelsome are less likely to engage in the conflictual act of protesting. This trait also has a negative and statistically significant effect ($p < .10$) in the convince model. However, the “generous, warm” trait measure has a positive and statistically significant effect in the volunteer model ($p < .05$), indicating that people high on this
element of Agreeableness are more likely to volunteer, which makes a great deal of theoretical sense. Although using one item to capture a broad facet is not ideal, the point is that there appears to be something going on below the surface of the Agreeableness trait. The 2010 AmericasBarometer survey only included two measures related to Agreeableness, but future surveys should include more in-depth measures of the Agreeableness facets.

Overall, previous research has found that Conscientiousness almost always has a negative effect on participation. For the most part, the results in Table 5 agree with this observation. The Conscientious measure is negative and statistically significant in the convince, volunteer, and contact models. Mondak et al. (2010) also find negative and significant relationships between Conscientiousness, contacting the government, and volunteering. Interestingly, I find that Conscientiousness is not a statistically significant predictor of turning out to vote in 2008. This runs counter to Gerber et al.’s (2011) finding that Conscientiousness is significantly related to voter turnout (though they used validated turnout rather than self-reported). Mondak et al. (2010), however, report a nonsignificant effect in their voter turnout model. As expected, Conscientiousness is a statistically significant predictor of protesting. Mondak et al. (2011) found a negative relationship in two Latin American counties, but it appears the relationship also holds in the United States. Those who score highly on this factor are less likely to protest than their counterparts. Indeed, Table 6 illustrates that a two standard deviation increase in Conscientiousness leads to a 3% decrease in the probability of engaging in protest/demonstration, holding all other variables at their mean levels. Put another way, a person with the lowest score on Conscientiousness has a predicted probability of protesting of .24 but shifting to the highest score on Conscientiousness decreases that probability to .08 (a difference of .16).

When it comes to the influence of Openness, I anticipated that this factor would be most relevant to those activities that entail exposure to new or conflicting ideas. The data support this expectation but with some caveats. Openness is a positive and statistically significant ($p < .05$) predictor in two models in Table 5, namely, working for a party or candidate and convincing someone how to vote. When trying to convince someone how to vote, it is expected that they may provide counter arguments or additional information, two things that people high on the Openness factor are likely to enjoy or at least tolerate. I expected that Openness would be relevant to a greater number of political acts, especially given Mondak et al.’s (2010) finding that Openness was related to 10 out of 10 of their participation measures. It is worth noting that the direction of the coefficients that are significant in Table 5 are generally not at odds with previous findings. Gerber et al. (2011), for instance, find a positive and significant relationship between Openness and working for a party of candidate. They note, however, that in their data the pattern for Openness is not consistent across acts of participation. Somewhat surprisingly, I find that Openness is unrelated to joining civic groups. Although civic groups are often homogeneous in membership, I expected that such groups were likely to provide the stimulation that people high on the Openness trait tend to enjoy. Future scholars should examine the extent to which personality traits influence participation in homogeneous or heterogeneous groups.

The final Big Five trait in Table 5 is Emotional Stability. Previous findings regarding this trait have been mixed (Mondak, 2010; Mondak et al., 2011), but Gerber et al. (2011) recently found evidence that this trait has a positive effect on turnout and a general measure of political participation. The results in Table 5 do not show a clear pattern. Emotional Stability is only statistically significant in the contact government model, the solve a local problem model, and the local participation model. In all three cases, the coefficient indicates that people who are more stable are less inclined to participate. This is consistent with the negative relationships between Emotional Stability and participation identified by Mondak (2010) and Mondak et al. (2010). I find no evidence that Emotional Stability is related to voter turnout, as Gerber et al. (2011) find, although they used a measure of validated rather than self-reported turnout.

**Conclusion and Future Research**

The goal of this article was to bring additional evidence to bear on the link between personality and participation. I used a new cross-sectional survey to reexamine previous results and explore the performance of the Big Five in the context of several additional measures of participation. Along the way, I compared my findings with those reported in recently published studies, highlighting commonalities and differences. I also compared personality measurement batteries across three recent political surveys, which performed fairly similarly. I found some support for the idea that the influence of personality factors depends on the nature of the act, but there were some instances where the data did not confirm the hypotheses. Clearly, the most consistent predictor of political and civic participation in this study was Extraversion, which is consistent with Gerber et al.’s (2011) recent analysis. Of the Big Five, this factor has the most obvious connection to social and political activities. Interestingly, Extraversion is predictive of the extent to which people affiliate with civic groups, which suggests that some people, simply because of “who they are,” may not be exposed to the types of social capital building activities that many scholars view as important to the democratic process. The rest of the Big Five traits were inconsistently related to political and civic engagement, especially Agreeableness and Emotional Stability.

In the future, researchers should consider integrating personality measures that go above and beyond the Big Five into models of personality. Models containing such traits could be tested against models containing the Big Five to see if they provide a better fit to the data or add explanatory power. Although the Big Five matter to some extent, there
are certainly other personality traits and dispositions that might be relevant to political participation and civic engagement. The study of personality and political behavior is an exciting new area of research, but much work remains to be done.

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**Notes**

1. Source: The AmericasBarometer by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), www.LapopSurveys.org. Note: I thank the LAPOP and its major supporters (the U.S. Agency for International Development, the UN Development Program, the Inter-American Development Bank, and Vanderbilt University) for making the data available.

2. The national index is made up of the following items: donating to a candidate, wearing a button or sticker, and attending a rally. The local index is made up of the following items: contacting a local official, attending a meeting about a local issue, and speaking at a local meeting.

3. The civic groups/organizations I use to create this measure are: religious associations, parents’ associations, community associations, professional associations, and political parties/political organizations. Although this does not encompass all possible groups, it provides a nice cross-section of groups/organizations.

4. Respondents were matched on gender, age, race, education, party identification, ideology, and political interest.

5. Mondak (2010) and Mondak et al. (2010) use the following items: philosophical, unreflective; an intellectual, not an intellectual (Openness), hardworking, lazy; neat, sloppy (Conscientiousness), outgoing, shy; extraverted, introverted (Extraversion), sympathetic, unsympathetic; kind, unkind (Agreeableness), relaxed, tense; calm, nervous (Emotional Stability). Gerber et al. (2011) and Gerber et al. (2011) use the following items: dependable, self-disciplined; disorganized, careless (Conscientiousness), open to new experiences, complex; conventional, uncreative (Openness), sympathetic, warm; critical, quarrelsome (Agreeableness), calm, emotionally stable; anxious, easily upset (Emotional Stability), extraverted, enthusiastic; reserved, quiet (Extraversion).

6. The mean for education is 3.25 on a 1 to 6 scale with a standard deviation of 1.5. The mean for income is 5 on a 1 to 10 scale with a standard deviation of 2.8.

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