



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on June 20, 2016

Correction! 2012 Study Showed Conservatives Are More Authoritarian? Actually, Not Really

It was exactly what the mainstream media wanted to report: a study purporting to show that conservatives are more likely than liberals to exhibit authoritarian traits and “psychoticism,” which researchers said amounted to being “uncooperative, hostile, troublesome,... socially withdrawn, [and] manipulative.”

Except that the study actually showed precisely the opposite.



And in January — four years after the study was conducted — the researchers issued what Powerline recently called “The Epic Correction of the Decade.”

The original article, which got the study conclusions backwards, was entitled “[Correlation not causation: the relationship between personality traits and political ideologies](#)” and was penned by three academics at Virginia Commonwealth University. And, as it states in the abstract, the study’s “results suggest that personality traits do not cause people to develop political attitudes; rather, the correlation between the two is a function of an innate common underlying genetic factor.” In other words, as a liberal might quip, perhaps conservatism can one day be “cured.”

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And if you believed the original article, you might suppose it should be. As the authors wrote in 2012, “In line with our expectations, P [for “Psychoticism”] (positively related to tough-mindedness and authoritarianism) is associated with social conservatism and conservative military attitudes.... We also find individuals higher in Neuroticism are more likely to be economically liberal. Furthermore, Neuroticism is completely unrelated to social ideology, which has been the focus of many in the field. Finally, those higher in Social Desirability are also more likely to express socially liberal attitudes.”

That was then — before the authors issued a major-league “Oops!” which didn’t get much press until just this month. As they [wrote](#) in a very lengthy retraction:

The authors regret that there is an error in the published version of “Correlation not Causation: The Relationship between Personality Traits and Political Ideologies” *American Journal of Political Science* 56 (1), 34-51. The interpretation of the coding of the political attitude items in the descriptive and preliminary analyses portion of the manuscript was exactly reversed. Thus, where we indicated that higher scores in Table 1 (page 40) reflect a more conservative response, they actually reflect a more liberal response. Specifically, in the original manuscript, the descriptive analyses report that those higher in Eysenck’s psychoticism are more conservative, but they are actually more liberal; and where the original manuscript reports those higher in neuroticism and social desirability are more liberal, they are, in fact, more conservative.

In other words, it’s actually liberals who exhibit more authoritarian traits and “psychoticism” and thus are more “uncooperative, hostile, troublesome,... socially withdrawn, [and] manipulative” — according



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to the study.

And [according](#) to paper co-author Brad Verhulst, the error was “quite minor.” As the *Washington Times* related, [citing](#) fellow co-author Pete Hatemi, “The mistake doesn’t affect the outcome of the research. He [Hatemi] said the study’s primary purpose was to demonstrate the ‘magnitude of the relationship’ between political beliefs and personality traits and its source, so the direction of relationships wasn’t all that important.” That is, except to the whole of the political punditry class and their readers and listeners — meaning, 99 percent of those who actually hear about these studies. And while Hatemi [told](#) Retraction Watch, perhaps a bit peevisly, “None of our papers actually give a damn about whether it’s a plus or a minus [ideologically],” newspapers are a different story: Now that the study is a minus for liberalism, it’s not getting quite the press the original, incorrectly reported version did.

Of course, that a research paper would contain errors will come as no surprise to keen observers of the scientific realm. As I [reported](#) in “Blinding Me with Science — Fraud and Folly for Fame and Funding,” retraction of research articles for fraud or misconduct may be 10 times as common today as four decades ago, and 15 percent or more of today’s scientific papers are fraudulent to some degree.

And that modern liberalism and authoritarianism are joined at the hip won’t come as a surprise to keen observers of the political realm. As philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote back in 1888 in *Twilight of the Idols*, “Liberal institutions stop being liberal as soon as they have been attained. After that, nothing damages freedom more terribly or more thoroughly than liberal institutions.” Just consider the French Revolution. Exhibit A in liberal tyranny, this event was when the terms “Right” and “Left” originated, as they relate to politics. The first modern leftists, the French Revolutionaries sought to socially re-engineer society, beginning the calendar anew with 1789 (the year of the revolution’s birth) and instituting 10-day weeks that omitted the Lord’s Day, reflecting their anti-Christian hostility. They also wantonly killed tens of thousands during the “Reign of Terror”; included among their victims were the Girondins, fellow French Revolutionaries — the 1.0 version — whose sin was not being as up-to-date as the French Revolutionaries 2.0. They were branded “enemies of the revolution.”

This phrase and the themes of anti-Christian prejudice, killing yesterday’s comrades, and erasing the past would be repeated by future leftist regimes. The Khmer Rouge in 1970s Cambodia had their “Year Zero” and exterminated up to one-third of the nation’s population. The Soviet Union’s Joseph Stalin spoke of utterly destroying the “old Bolsheviks,” had people airbrushed out of history books, and killed at least 20 million people. China’s Mao Tse-tung tried to eliminate every vestige of the nation’s heritage; somewhat reminiscent of the Islamic State and Taliban, he destroyed Buddhist statues. And he murdered perhaps 60 million of his countrymen.

And the Left’s tyranny isn’t congruent with its “principles” — as it hasn’t really got any — but is merely proportional to its power. While we don’t yet have death squads, we do have death-of-Truth squads, with dissent-stifling, leftist-disgorged speech codes on college campuses, workplaces, and elsewhere. We see leftist state bureaucracies persecuting private business owners for not servicing politically favored events (faux weddings). And just recently we [witnessed](#) the San Jose police allow a violent leftist mob to attack Donald Trump supporters.

So are today’s liberals really just vice-ridden people? Writer Peter Schweizer certainly might think so, as findings indicating leftist “psychoticism” are nothing new to him. In fact, in a 2008 [piece](#) entitled “Don’t listen to the liberals — Right-wingers really are nicer people, latest research shows,” the studies he cited indicated that liberals relative to conservatives are:



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- More money-oriented and greedy. As Schweizer wrote, leftists are even more likely to agree with the statement ‘there are [sic] no right or wrong ways to make money’.”
 - Less likely to donate to charity and help the poor.
 - Less likely to care for an ill parent.
 - Less likely to say they derive happiness from putting others’ happiness before their own.
 - Less interested in getting married (they sure like manipulating marriage, though).
 - Less likely to have children.
 - Less likely to believe they should place their children’s well-being before their own.
 - Less likely to hug their children (Schweizer says that his wife “thinks they’re too busy hugging trees”).
- They are, however, much more likely to misrepresent studies so that they show exactly the opposite.



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