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Are we what parties we support? Personality traits and party support in a multi-party system

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Abstract

There is relatively little evidence about the association of personality to political behavior in multi-party systems. We analyze the association of two personality traits to party support in a multi-party system, where parties are differently aligned along the economic left-right axis and the GAL-TAN axis, that extends from green, alternative and libertarian to traditional, authoritarian and nationalist values. Machiavellianism refers to a manipulative and cynical personality, whereas Perspective-Taking is a tendency to see things from others' perspective. We ask whether the left-right or the GAL-TAN axis is more relevant to the association between the personality traits and party support. We observed that the nationalist and conservative Finns party supporters score higher on Machiavellianism and lower on Perspective-Taking in comparison to the environmental and liberal Greens party supporters. These two parties are located at the opposite ends of the GAL-TAN axis. We do not see corresponding results on parties at the opposite ends of the left-right axis. The result suggests that personality traits may be more relevant for supporting parties that are best characterized by their location on the GAL-TAN axis.

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INTRODUCTION

Explaining party choice is one of the central tasks of research on political behavior. When the explanatory power of socio-economic factors has diminished, scholars have looked for other potential accounts. A growing number of studies have found a connection between *personality* or *personality traits*, that is, relatively permanent individual characteristics, and political behavior (Arvan, 2013; Duspara & Greitemeyer, 2017; Eisenberg-Berg & Mussen, 1980; Hasson et al., 2018; Jonason, 2014; Schieman et al., 2019; Unnever et al., 2005).

We study the association of Perspective-Taking, a cognitive dimension of empathy, and Machiavellianism, a measure of cynicism, to party support in a multi-party system. To measure personality traits, we use the Interpersonal Reactivity Index's (IRI) Perspective-Taking scale (Davis, 1980) and the Machiavellian Personality scale (Christie & Geis, 1970; Dahling et al., 2009). Perspective-Taking is needed for seeing things from an out-group perspective and reaching across political divides. Machiavellianism represents cynicism and using others for personal gain, traits that can be related to an instrumental view of politics. A broad literature pertains to the association between empathy and political attitudes (Bäckström & Björklund, 2007; Diáz-Lázaro et al., 2014; McFarland, 2010; Nicol & Rounding, 2013). Machiavellianism has likewise been observed to be associated to political attitudes (Anderson & Cheers, 2018; Arvan, 2013; Duspara & Greitemeyer, 2017; Hodson et al., 2009; Hodson et al., 2019; Jonason, 2014; Jones, 2013). Perspective-Taking and Machiavellianism are likely to be negatively correlated and therefore also differently associated to political variables.

While it is probable that Perspective-Taking and Machiavellianism are linked to political attitudes, their association to party support remains largely unexplored, particularly in the context of multi-party systems (Duspara & Greitemeyer, 2017; Hodson et al., 2019). Focusing on Perspective-Taking and Machiavellianism gives a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between personality traits and political attitudes compared to the broader Big Five measure (Aichholzer et al., 2018).

We use Finland as a case of a multi-party system with distinguishable left-right and GAL-TAN orderings of the parties. Left-right is the traditional economic dimension, whereas the GAL-TAN axis is based on socio-cultural values and varies from green, alternative and libertarian values to traditionalism, authority and nationalism (Hooghe et al., 2002; Marks et al., 2006). Our main observation is that supporting parties in the opposite ends of the GAL-TAN dimension, the Greens and the Finns, have opposite associations to Perspective-Taking and Machiavellianism. We do not see parallel relations to parties in the opposite ends of the left-right axis.

Literature review

It seems reasonable to assume that the connection between personality traits and party choice goes via values because values are what parties stand for, and because personality seems to be related to values. Empirical literature also shows that values are connected to personality traits (Parks-Leduc et al., 2015; Roccas et al., 2002).

Regarding political attitudes, existing literature is heavily based on the Big Five personality measures (Aidt & Rauh, 2018; Bakker et al., 2016; Carney et al., 2008; Schoen & Schumann, 2007; Vecchione et al., 2011; Ziller & Berning, 2021). While the Big Five covers different personality factors, certain traits are not well covered with the Big Five and focus on lower-level facets can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the drivers of political attitudes (Aichholzer et al., 2018).

Perspective-Taking is a dimension of empathy, which encompasses cognitive and affective aspects (Batson, 2009; Cuff et al., 2016). Cognitive empathy involves understanding others, while affective empathy involves experiencing their emotions (Cuff et al., 2016). Empathic concern, marked by compassion and care, is often separated from affective empathy (Cuff et al., 2016; Edele et al., 2013). The affective and cognitive components of empathy are interconnected (Batson, 2009). The widely used Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) contains four sub-scales: Fantasy, Perspective-Taking, Empathic Concern and Personal Distress that account for different dimensions of empathy (Davis, 1980). Perspective-Taking represents a cognitive and Empathic Concern an affective aspect of dispositional empathy. We focus on Perspective-Taking, that is, the tendency to put oneself in others' shoes and see things from their perspectives. While Perspective-Taking is limited to the cognitive dimension of empathy, the willingness and motivation to see things from others' perspective appears more relevant to politics than the affective components of empathy. Perspective-Taking is composed of abilities people need to engage in constructive discussion, compromise and agreement essential for political decision-making.

The core idea of linking empathy to ideological orientation is based on values about equality. Those on the left (liberals) strive for equality, whereas those on the right (conservatives) tend to accept inequality and put more emphasis on individual responsibility (Schieman et al., 2019). This inclination can explain why those on the right are not as likely as those on the left to take the perspective of less well-off people.

Existing studies on the connection between empathy and conservative—liberal (or left—right) ideology use either IRI's empathic concern scale (Schieman et al., 2019; Unnever et al., 2005) or respondents' self-evaluations about their inclination to feel empathy (Eisenberg-Berg & Mussen, 1980; Hasson et al., 2018). Evidence suggests that liberals (those on the left) are more empathetic than conservatives (those on the right). Research on more specific political values shows that low levels of empathy, measured with the whole IRI or its Empathic Concern and/or Perspective-Taking items, are associated to racial prejudices (Bäckström & Björklund, 2007; Diáz-Lázaro et al., 2014; McFarland, 2010; Nicol & Rounding, 2013), opposing immigration (Grönlund et al., 2017), climate change denial (Jylhä & Akrami, 2015) and support for capital punishment (Unnever et al., 2005). A specific outgroup empathy scale seems to explain a large variety of attitudes towards minorities (Sirin et al., 2021).

We are aware of one study which examined empathy and party support at the individual level. In a German study, a low level of compassion, measured with the compassion facet from the Big Five's Agreeableness factor, was associated to support for a populist far-right party (Aichholzer et al., 2018). State-level analysis from the USA showed that Perspective-taking and Empathic concern were lower in states with more Republican voters (Hodson et al., 2019). Overall, it seems that liberals have more empathic concern and tendency for perspective-taking compared to conservatives, whereas prejudiced attitudes are more common among those who have lower levels of empathic concern.

People with a Machiavellian character tend to manipulate and exploit others for personal gain, behave in a self-interested manner and disregard moral norms (Bereczkei, 2015; Czibor & Bereczkei, 2012; Monaghan et al., 2018). Machiavellianism is measured with a Machiavellian scale (Christie & Geis, 1970). Existing evidence suggests that high Machs are more likely to behave unethically compared to low Machs (Jones & Kavanagh, 1996; Wolfson, 1981). High Machs are also less altruistic and less concerned about following social norms, but at the same time they tend to react to the possibility of getting punished for free riding (Bereczkei et al., 2013; Czibor & Bereczkei, 2012; Gunnthorsdottir et al., 2002; Spitzer et al., 2007). Machiavellianism is often

studied in combination with narcissism and psychopathy, which together form the Dark Triad (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

Machiavellianism has been observed to be positively associated to racism and prejudice (Anderson & Cheers, 2018; Hodson et al., 2009; Jones, 2013), to conservative value orientation (Arvan, 2013), to right-wing political orientation (Duspara & Greitemeyer, 2017) and to low rates of political liberalism (Jonason, 2014). Several studies have observed a positive association between Machiavellianism and social dominance orientation, capturing the endorsement of group hierarchies and inequality (Cichocka et al., 2017; Hodson et al., 2009; Jones & Figueredo, 2013).

What does existing literature say about the association between Machiavellianism and Perspective-Taking? Empathic concern and Machiavellianism seem to be opposite characteristics, whereas Perspective-Taking is not so clearly in contrast with Machiavellianism. Using others for personal gain requires an ability to understand others' mental states (Bagozzi et al., 2013). Yet empirical evidence gives reason to believe that high Machs are not very good in perspective-taking or in reading others' minds (Bagozzi et al., 2013; Feldman et al., 2020; Giammarco & Vernon, 2014; Loftus & Glenwick, 2001). A recent meta-analysis concludes that Machiavellianism has a negative correlation with both affective and cognitive empathy (Blötner et al., 2021).

Overall, results on Machiavellianism and especially perspective-taking suggest that these traits are more often connected to values that characterize the GAL-TAN axis rather than the left-right orientation. A vast majority of studies look at the association between political values and personality traits, whereas party or candidate choice is investigated only in a couple of studies (Aichholzer et al., 2018; Duspara & Greitemeyer, 2017). More evidence is therefore needed to find out whether associations to values extend to party preferences. We contribute to the existing literature by studying the association of Perspective-taking and Machiavellianism to party choice in Finland where different parties are located at the ends of the left-right and GAL-TAN axes. The Finnish party system is described in more detail in the Supplementary information.

Hypotheses

We formulate hypotheses on associations rather than causal relations because personality traits and political attitudes may co-vary rather than be causally related (Osborne & Sibley, 2020). A lack of Empathic Concern and/or Perspective-Taking are associated to values such as conservatism, prejudice and anti-immigration attitudes (Bäckström & Björklund, 2007; Diáz-Lázaro et al., 2014; Grönlund et al., 2017; McFarland, 2010; Nicol & Rounding, 2013; Unnever et al., 2005) which appear characteristic to the GAL-TAN, rather than to the economic left-tight, axis. Prejudiced values may reflect inability or unwillingness to consider others' perspectives, especially of those who belong to an outgroup. Supporting parties on the left can reflect a willingness to consider the perspective of the poor, but leftist parties can also be supported because it serves one's own economic interests, for example, acquiring benefits from redistribution. Existing evidence does not provide direct evidence about the association of perspective-taking to the left- or right-wing orientation. However, evidence shows that perspective-takers tend to be more liberal (Schieman et al., 2019; Unnever et al., 2005), which can indicate that they are also left-wing. We assume that Perspective-Taking is associated to support for parties in the opposite ends of the GAL-TAN and the left-right axis, although our assumption regarding the left-right axis is more tentative. We hypothesize that *Perspective-Taking is positively associated to support for GAL (left) -end parties and negatively to support for TAN (right) -end parties (H1).*

Existing evidence shows that Machiavellianism is positively associated to racism, prejudice, conservatism and right-wing political orientation (Anderson & Cheers, 2018; Arvan, 2013; Duspara & Greitemeyer, 2017; Hodson et al., 2009; Jones, 2013) and negatively to political liberalism (Jonason, 2014). These kinds of values may be based on Machiavellian people's cynicism and self-interest, perhaps also a disregard of social norms. It is notable though that a Machiavellian person with low-income could support redistribution and thereby left-wing parties because that would serve his/her personal interests. We hypothesize that *Machiavellianism is positively associated to support for TAN (right) -end parties and negatively to support for GAL (left) -end parties (H2).*

In addition to party support, we examine how personality traits are related to responders' self-placement on the left-right axis. If people who tend to take others' perspective, are also likely to see things from the perspective of people with low-income, it can be assumed that perspective-takers tend to have a left-wing political orientation. Machiavellians, in turn, may be more likely to have a right-wing orientation, if they support the view that people should be responsible of their own fortune. Evidence shows that perspective-takers tend to be more liberal (Schieman et al., 2019; Unnever et al., 2005), which can indicate that they are also left-wing. Machiavellians in turn appear to be right-wing (Duspara & Greitemeyer, 2017). We therefore hypothesize that *Perspective-Taking is positively associated to left-wing orientation and Machiavellianism to right-wing orientation (H3).* However, we acknowledge that the basis for this hypothesis is somewhat weak because evidence on the association of values that characterize the left-right axis to Perspective-Taking or Machiavellianism is not extensive.

Materials and methods

We analyse two survey data sets collected in connection to larger research projects.[1] The first data is based on a survey mailed to a random sample of 6000 Finnish citizens, and it was collected in 2014 ($n = 1699$, response rate 28%, median age = 56, 54.4% females).[2] The respondents filled in a survey with 53 items, including the Perspective-Taking scale. The survey included age and gender that are used as controls in the regression model. The second data is based on a panel of respondents, and it was collected in June 2018.[3] The sample is representative in terms of age, gender and residential area ($n = 1600$, median age = 47 years, 50.7% females). The respondents filled in an online survey with 29 items, including the Machiavellian scale. The survey included age, gender and the level of education that are used as controls in the regression model. Frequencies of party supporter groups, gender and age among respondents in the two data sets are represented in Table S1.

We use a self-report measure of empathy because of the possibility to include it in a survey. Five items from the Perspective-Taking subscale of Davis's (1980) Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Table S2) were include in the survey. To measure Machiavellianism, we used the Machiavellian

[1] The studies are reported in Strandberg et al. (2019) and in Herne et al. (2022). The present study was not pre-registered.

[2] The data was collected in connection with a deliberative mini-public experiment. The data used here consist of an independent survey assigned to a quasi-control group that was not aware of the deliberative mini-public experiment and did not took part in it. Data available at http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:fsd:T-FSD3101.

[3] The data was collected in connection with a survey experiment. After having completed tasks related to the survey experiment, not related to personality measures, respondents answered to several survey questions including the Machiavellian scale. The mean scores of the Machiavellian scale, and shares of party support are not different in the four treatment groups ($F = .324$, $p = .808$ (Mach); $\chi^2 = 25.13$, $p = .399$ (party support)). Data available at http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:fsd:T-FSD3587.3.

Personality scale (Table S3) (Dahling et al., 2009), which is an updated version of Christie and Geis's (1970) original scale. The new scale was developed to improve certain shortcomings of the original index: inconsistent reliability, an ambiguous factor structure and the inclusion of several poor items. The items of the new Machiavellian Personality scale use formulations more familiar to contemporary people and excludes the old test's reference to a celebrity not well-known in Finland. The analysis was conducted using SPSS Statistics (IBM Corp, 2019).

Results

Both Perspective-Taking ($\alpha = .833$) and Machiavellian Personality ($\alpha = .848$) scales show satisfactory internal consistency giving basis for their further use in analysis. Table 1 represents the mean values of Perspective-Taking and Machiavellianism for the Finnish parties. The table shows that the Swedish People's Party supporters have the lowest and the Greens supporters the highest mean score of Perspective-Taking. The Finns party supporters' mean Perspective-Taking score is the second lowest and rather close to the Swedish People's Party supporters' score.[4] Furthermore, the Finns party supporters have the highest mean Machiavellianism score, whereas the Christian Democrats supporters have the lowest score. One-way ANOVA test shows a statistically significant difference between the parties in terms of the personality scale scores: Machiavellianism ($F = 7.411$, $p = .000$), Perspective-Taking ($F = 7.268$, $p = .000$).

To study further the associations between party support and personality, we used multinomial regression models with party supporter groups as dependent variables and personality traits as independent variables along with controls. We used gender, age and the level of education as controls because earlier research have established their connection to party support in Finland (Suuronen et al., 2020). The control variables are also associated to some of the personality measures we use: Men tend to score higher on Machiavellianism compared to women (Jonason & Webster, 2010), whereas women tend to have more empathy (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004). Moreover, Machiavellianism and cognitive empathy tend to be decreasing with age (Beadle & de la Vega, 2019; Götz et al., 2020).

Table 2 presents results on the association of Perspective-Taking and party support in the 2014 data. The reference category for party support is the Greens party. The category was selected to obtain enough observations in the reference group and to compare the party in the GAL end of the GAL-TAN scale to other parties.[5] Table 2 reveals that apart from Left Alliance and Other (small parties), all party supporter groups have lower Perspective-Taking levels compared to the Greens. The biggest negative association is with supporting the Finns (Exp(B) = .329). Other statistically significant negative associations are with supporting the Christian Democrats (Exp(B) = .348), Social Democrats (Exp(B) = .534), Center (Exp(B) = .542 and National Coalition (Exp(B) = .627).

The results from this data give partial support to H1 because parties in the opposite ends of the GAL-TAN axis, the Greens and the Finns, show opposite results on Perspective-Taking. Furthermore, Left Alliance, closest to the Greens in the GAL-end, is not statistically significantly different from the Greens. Christian Democrats, closest to the Finns in the TAN-end, are also rather similar to the Finns in terms of their Perspective-Taking score. Regarding the left-right

[4] In the 2014 data, there are only seven observations on Swedish People's Party (SPP) supporters and in regression analysis they are included in category "other".

[5] If a reference category is too small, odds ratios will have large standard errors and the comparison of the odds ratios would contain more uncertainty.

TABLE 1 Means (standard deviations) and Cronbach's alphas for Perspective-Taking and the Machiavellian Personality scales (highest scores bolded) by party, and left-right and GAL-TAN values by party.[a]

Party	Perspective-taking	*N* (%)	Machiavellianism	*N* (%)	Left–right	GAL-TAN
Left alliance	3.84 (.72)	71 (6.8)	2.52 (.58)	114 (11.6)	1.49	3.41
Social democrats	3.68 (.72)	185 (17.8)	2.69 (.59)	193 (19.7)	1.75	3.19
Greens	**4.04** (.60)	111 (10.7)	2.41 (.64)	159 (16.2)	1.92	3.53
Center	3.68 (.70)	253 (24.4)	2.63 (.71)	94 (9.6)	2.5	2.8
Swedish People's Party	3.24 (.74)	7 (.7)	2.57 (.61)	33 (3.4)	2.31	3.36
Christian democrats	3.46 (.94)	32 (3.1)	2.25 (.53)	29 (3.0)	2.15	2.39
National coalition	3.77 (.69)	241 (23.2)	2.54 (.53)	174 (17.8)	2.89	3.05
Finns	3.42 (.79)	127 (12.2)	**2.85** (.60)	156 (15.9)	2.17	2.13
Other	3.96 (.62)	10 (1.0)	2.77 (.47)	27 (2.8)		
Mean all	3.71 (.73)		2.61 (.60)			
α	.83		.85			
N	1625	1037	1600	979	1285	1285

[a]Values on the left-right and GAL-TAN dimensions vary between one (most left/most TAN) and four (most right/most GAL) (Grönlund, 2019).

TABLE 2 The association of Perspective-Taking score to party support (multinomial logistic regression).

	Left alliance		Social democrats		Center	
	B (SE)	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**
Intercept	−.535 (1.098)		.705 (.874)		.837 (.841)	
Perspective-taking	−.328 (.236)	.720	−.627 (.190)***	.534	−.613 (.183)***	.542
Gender	−.918 (.328)**	.399	−.675 (.271)*	.509	−.889 (.260)***	.411
Age	.039 (.010)***	1.040	.052 (.008)***	1.054	.056 (.008)***	1.058

	Christian democrats		National coalition		Finns		Other	
	B (SE)	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp (B)**
Intercept	−.262 (1.397)		1.345 (.825)		4.473 (.870)***		.427 (1.660)	
Perspective-taking	−1.055 (.287)***	.348	−.467 (.181)**	.627	−1.110 (.198)***	.329	−.672 (.372)	.511
Gender	−.205 (.441)	.814	−.886 (.258)***	.413	−1.247 (.289)***	.287	−1.279 (.543)**	.278
Age	.060 (.014)***	1.062	.037 (.007)***	1.038	.022 (.016)	1.012	.022 (.016)	1.022
N	1035							

Note: $R^2 = .158$ (Nagelkerke), Model $\chi^2 = 173.563$, $p < .001$. Gender: male = 0, female = 1; The reference category for party choice is the Greens. Swedish People's party (SPP) is included in "Other" due to a small number of observations ($n = 7$). Category "do not know" or "do not want to tell" is excluded ($n = 588$). Multicollinearity was evaluated with VIF factors which did not indicate multicollinearity between the variables. .

*$p < .05$.

**$p < .01$.

***$p < .001$.

axis, parties closest to the Greens, Social Democrats and Christian Democrats, are not similar to the Greens, and neither is National Coalition in the right end that much unlike the Greens in terms of Perspective-Taking. We conclude that the tendency to take others' perspective increases the odds for supporting parties in the GAL-end of the GAL-TAN axis, whereas the tendency to take others' perspective reduces odds for supporting parties in the TAN-end.

Table 3 shows multinomial regression results on the Machiavellian personality scale in the 2018 data. The reference category for party support is again the Greens. Regarding the Machiavellianism score, we see a positive association with supporting the Finns (Exp(B) = 3.069), the Social Democrats (Exp(B) = 2.628), Other (small parties) (Exp(B) = 2.496), the Center party (Exp(B) = 2.090), National Coalition (Exp(B) = 1.618) and the Left Alliance (Exp(B) = 1.595). Other associations are not statistically significant. Regarding the GAL-TAN axis, we see again that the Finns supporters are most unlike the Greens supporters, whereas the Left Alliance supporters are most like the Greens supporters, although in the case of Machiavellianism, their difference to the Greens is statistically significant. Regarding the left-right axis, the Christian Democrats, who are closest to the Greens, do not differ from the Greens statistically significantly. National Coalition supporters are not that much unlike the Greens in terms of Machiavellianism, although they are the rightmost party. These observations give partial support to H2 because again the GAL-TAN axis fits rather well with party supporters' Machiavellianism, whereas the left-right axis does not seem to fit so well.

Our overall interpretation of these results is that regarding both Perspective-Taking and Machiavellianism, especially the Greens and the Finns supporters represent one another's opposites. The ability for Perspective-Taking decreases the odds for supporting the Finns, whereas Machiavellianism increases the odds for supporting the Finns when compared to the reference party the Greens. In other words, Perspective-Taking and Machiavellianism are inversely related to support for parties in the opposite ends of the GAL-TAN axis.

To analyze the association between the personality traits and responders' self-placement on the left-right orientation, we used two linear regression (OLS) models. Table 4 shows how the Machiavellian personality and Perspective-Taking scores as well as age, gender and level of education are related to left-right orientation. Model I shows, that Perspective-Taking does not have a statistically significance association to left-right orientation, and Model II that the Machiavellianism score is positively associated to right-wing orientation. H3 is thereby partly supported.

It is noteworthy that we conducted several models with interaction variables such as age*personality trait and gender*personality trait. These terms did not show statistically significant associations and they did not improve the goodness of fit of the models.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We analyzed the association of two personality traits, Machiavellianism and Perspective-Taking, to party support in Finland. Both personality traits had the clearest associations with supporting two parties at the opposite ends of the GAL-TAN axis. The ability for Perspective-Taking decreases the odds for supporting the Finns compared to the Greens. The opposite holds for Machiavellianism, because high Machiavellianism increases the odds for supporting the Finns compared to the Greens. Regarding responders' self-placement on the left-right axis, Machiavellianism was positively associated to right-wing orientation, whereas Perspective-Taking was not associated to the left-right axis.

TABLE 3 The association of the Machiavellian personality scale to party support (multinomial logistic regression).

	Left alliance		Social democrats		Center		Swedish Peoples Party	
	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)
Intercept	−1.515 (.918)		−3.210 (.862)***		−2.383 (.974)*		−4.784 (1.645)**	
Mach score	.467 (.226)*	1.595	.966 (.203)***	2.628	.737 (.240)**	2.090	.598 (.345)	1.818
Gender	−.304 (.265)	.738	−.928 (.236)***	.395	−.807 (.279)**	.446	−1.378 (.413)***	.252
Age	.028 (.008)***	1.029	.051 (.007)***	1.053	.043 (.009)***	1.044	.048 (.013)***	1.050
Education secondary	−.899 (.534)	.411	−.883 (.513)	.413	−1.577 (.531)**	.207	−.432 (1.121)	.649
Tertiary	−1.445 (.550)*	.236	−1.132 (.520)*	.322	−1.716 (.539)***	.180	.598 (1.092)	1.819
	Christian democrats		**National coalition**		**Finns**		**Other**	
	B (SE)	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**
Intercept	−1.405 (1.465)		−3.507 (1.085)***		−2.229 (.877)*		−4.361 (1.696)*	
Mach score	−.411 (.391)	.663	.481 (.206)*	1.618	1.121 (.210)***	3.069	.915 (.356)*	2.496
Gender	−.478 (.421)	.620	−1.397 (.253)***	.433	−1.397 (.253)***	.247	−1.641 (.478)***	.194
Age	.042 (.013)**	1.043	.037 (.008)***	1.038	.024 (.008)**	1.024	.023 (.013)	1.023
Education								
Secondary	−1.068 (.786)	.344	.872 (.845)	2.392	−.885 (.519)	.413	.166 (1.130)	1.181
Tertiary	−.977 (.786)	.377	1.512 (.843)	4.537	−1.471 (.534)*	.230	−.140 (1.148)	.870
N	979							

Note: $R^2 = .238$ (Nagelkerke). Model $\chi^2 = 260.746$. $p < .001$. Gender: male = 0, female = 1; The reference category for party choice is the Greens; and for education primary education. Category "do not know" or "do not want to tell" is excluded ($n = 621$). Multicollinearity was evaluated with VIF factors which did not indicate multicollinearity between the variables.

*$p < .05$.

**$p < .01$.

***$p < .001$.

TABLE 4 OLS-regressions on the effect of the Machiavellian Personality scale and Perspective-Taking on left-right orientation.

	Model I	Model II
	B (SE)	B (SE)
(Constant)	6.078 (.348)***	4.898 (.382)***
Mach		.252 (.091)**
Perspective-Taking	−.061 (.075)	
Age	.016 (.003)***	.011 (.003)**
Gender	−.043 (.109)	−.456 (.107)***
Education		
Secondary		.259 (.194)
Tertiary		.683 (.198)***

Note: Age is measured in years. Gender: male = 0, female = 1; The reference category for education is primary education. .
*$p < .05$.
**$p < .01$.
***$p < .001$.

These results indicate that high Machs and high perspective-takers seem to be one another's opposites, which aligns with the types of values these personality traits are associated to. The result is also in line with studies that have observed a negative association between Perspective-Taking and Machiavellianism (Giammarco & Vernon, 2014; Loftus & Glenwick, 2001).

It is noteworthy that our results regarding the Machiavellianism of the Christian Democrats supporters, a centrist party along the left-right axis and rather close to the Finns in the TAN-end of the GAL-TAN axis, does not seem to align well with the Machiavellianism of the Finns supporters. It is possible that the Christian Democrats supporters' religious devotion accounts for their low Machiavellianism (Tang & Tang, 2010). There is evidence that religiousness can matter. In an American study, religiousness was observed to moderate the connection between empathy and conservative-liberal orientation so that highly religious conservatives and liberals were not different from each other in terms of their empathy levels (Schieman et al., 2019). However, we do not see the same effect because the Christian Democrats supporters were relatively close to the Finns in terms of Perspective-Taking.

Our overall conclusion is that personality traits were associated to both party support and to the left-right ideological orientation. In particular, the Greens and the Finns representing opposites of the GAL-TAN axis also show opposing results on Machiavellianism and Perspective-Taking. These observations support the assumption that those who support GAL-parties are inclined to take others' perspective, whereas TAN-party supporters are less inclined to do so. Cynicism, manipulativeness and self-interest also appear more characteristic to TAN-party supporters compared to GAL-party supporters. It is worth pointing out that the Greens and the Finns are also those two Finnish parties that have most often been connected to identity politics. This is of no surprise given that the GAL-TAN axis can also be seen to reflect social identities more closely than the traditional economic left-right axis (Börzel & Risse, 2018). We consider it possible that people whose social identity is closely related to a support for a certain party, are also more aligned in terms of their personalities, compared to people who support certain parties because of the material or economic interests the parties are supposed to deliver. This assumption yet calls for empirical validation.

Certain limitations of our study require consideration. First, Perspective-Taking only captures one dimension of empathy. Further studies could examine whether similar patterns are observed with different sub scales of empathy. Empathic concern would estimate the potential differences between party supporter groups to care about and feel sympathy towards others and could provide an interesting measure for future research. The distinction between intra and intergroup empathy also seems relevant because different party supporter groups are likely to vary in their tendency to experience these empathy types. Intragroup empathy may be more relevant to right wing populists whose tendencies toward closure, order, and stability may turn empathy toward smaller, ordered, and less permeable social circles (Waytz et al., 2019). Intergroup empathy may instead be characteristic to liberals who tend to express compassion toward less structured and more universal entities (Waytz et al., 2019). These two types of empathy are not distinguished and measured in our research, whereas future research could benefit from a broader selection of empathy dimensions.

Another possible limitation is the use of self-assessment scales to measures personality traits because self-assessment can be vulnerable to social desirability. Our results may be biased if supporters of different parties also tend to react differently to social desirability. Evidence on social desirability effects is somewhat mixed (Baron-Cohen et al., 2001; Sassenrath, 2020). Further research could therefore examine more closely whether different ways to measure personality traits influence their observed association to political attitudes.

What about the possibilities to generalize from our observations on Finnish data? While each country has its specific party system, many western countries also share certain characteristics. We see no reason to believe that what we see in Finland regarding the radical right Finns party and the environmental and liberal Greens would not hold in other countries with similar parties, but empirical validation of this expectation is needed.

What does our main observation—*parties in the opposite ends of the GAL-TAN axis seem to represent different personality traits*—imply to politics? What does it say about the possibilities for a civilized and constructive discussion and decision-making? While the Finnish political landscape is not as polarized as politics is in many majoritarian systems, polarization seems to be increasing in Finland (Isotalo et al., 2020). If party supporters in the ends of the GAL-TAN axis also tend to represent different personalities, it may undermine possibilities for these two groups to trust and understand one another, as well as impede agreement and compromise, essential for democratic governance in multi-party systems. If personalities play a role in polarization, understanding the role of personalities is also essential in trying to find ways to alleviate polarization tendencies.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The contributions of authors in relation to each of the following: (i) conception, design, and (ii) data collection: Kaisa Herne; (iii) data analysis and interpretation: Hanna Björkstedt; (iv) manuscript drafting and revising: Hanna Björkstedt and Kaisa Herne; (v) approval of final version for submission: Hanna Björkstedt and Kaisa Herne.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in Data repository Finnish Social Science Data Archive, Tampere, at http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:fsd:T-FSD3101and https://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:fsd:T-FSD3587.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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