Does Personality Matter? Personality factors as determinants of legislative recruitment and legislators’ policy preferences

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Abstract: The paper inquires into the impact of personality-factors on the selection and self-selection of recruits for parliamentary mandates by comparing the personality profile of German MPs with a matching sample of the general population (matching in terms of education, gender and age). It further determines whether MPs personality has an impact on their policy preferences (expansionist vs. restrictive budget policies, expansion vs. restriction of welfare state benefits, limitation vs. extension of civic rights etc.). Party affiliation of MPs will be used as a control variable. The paper will make use of data from the Jena Parliamentarians study which have been collected under direction of the author and provide information on a broad spectrum of issues like MPs family backgrounds, recruitment and career experiences and policy preferences. The second wave of the Jena Parliamentarians study was carried out in 2007 and included also a shortened version of the ‘Big Five’ (identical to a version used in general population studies) for 1223 German MPs at federal, state and European level.

Whilst the impact of legislators’ social backgrounds and political affiliations on their preferences, their recruitment and their careers is widely researched, the influence of their personalities is much less explored, particularly when it comes to large collectivities of policy makers. The reasons for this asymmetry are twofold. On the one side there are obvious problems of measurement and access, although F. I. Greenstein’s concern about the “scientifically” intractable nature of the subject matter of personality and politics’ and a looming ‘failure to develop firm, communicable standards of inquiry’ (1969:141) is less justified today after the introduction of some canonized and widely used instruments of personality testing, like the Big Five in the 1980s. Because of seemingly insurmountable barriers of access to ‘important living leaders’ (the dead ones are inaccessible anyway) direct personality assessment via these standard instruments is, however, still considered to be inapplicable in political elite research (Winter 2003). Contrary to this pessimistic assessment, research presented in my paper will attempt to show that it is possible to administer a standard personality test in a large sample survey of 1223 legislators at state and national level, including top ranking office holders in cabinet positions.

There are, however, objections based on normative principles against applying to the field of political research, instruments that trace the foundations of political preferences and the determinants of political behaviour back to mental dispositions, which are supposedly rooted in the genotype (John & Srivastava 1999). The idea that the behaviour of political elites and the gap between elites and the masses are somehow tractable to inherited neurophysiologic dispositions and differences seems hard to reconcile with the notions of freedom and equality that are the basic values of liberal democracy. On the other hand, if the selective mechanisms
inherent in democratic representation are at the core of ‘legitimate’ processes of political elite formation, why should the resulting body of professional politicians not differ from the rest of the population in terms of deep rooted and possibly partly inherited psychological qualities? The present paper follows the view that the ‘normative domain of policy is distinct from the positive domain of scientific inquiry’ (Thornhill & Palmer 2000: 5-6) and therefore suggests to discuss the impact of results from research into personality factors on normative concepts of democracy after the empirical evidence has been established.

My paper inquires into the significance of personality factors in the recruitment, careers and policy preferences of German legislators (or ‘representative elites’) at state, national and European level. A sample survey of the whole German population will be used as a control group to establish the distinctiveness of political elites from the masses. Data at mass level is provided by the 2005 survey of the German Socio-economic Panel Study (SOEP) which contains a standard version of the Big Five for a sample population of about 17,300 respondents (Rammstedt 2007). To control for the effects of the skewed composition of German parliaments in terms of gender, education and age, elite-masses comparisons will be also based on a re-weighted version of the grand population sample adapting it to the elite sample in terms of these three characteristics. ‘Personality’ is conceptualized as an ‘individually patterned integration of processes of perception, memory, judgement, goal-seeking, and emotional expression and regulation’ (Winter 2003:110). The expectation is that the pattern of personality traits characterizing an individual will predispose this person to perceive situations similarly and to react consistently despite changing stimulus conditions, values, abilities, motives, defences and aspects of identity and personal style.

In the second (2007) wave of German Parliamentarian Study (GPS), which is used as the elite sample in this paper, personality traits of representatives were recorded with a shortened version of the Big Five item-inventory, which reduced the original number of 15 items used in the SOEP-survey to ten (Best et al. 2007). This reduction was deemed necessary to keep the overall duration of the interview (which contained large areas of other questions) within palatable length for an impatient and time constrained population of respondents.
For each of the Big Five factors two items from the more comprehensive SOEP-inventory were selected:

- **Openness**
  - I am a character full of new ideas
  - I have a vivid imagination

- **Conscientiousness**
  - I am exacting in my work
  - I get chores done effectually and effectively

- **Extraversion**
  - I am communicative
  - I don’t like to draw attention to myself (reversed)

- **Agreeableness**
  - I can forgive people
  - I am sometimes hard with people (reversed)

- **Neuroticism**
  - I am relaxed and can cope well with stress
  - I am often worried about things (reversed)

A confirmatory factor analysis with the ten selected items resulted in perfect Big Five-factor solutions for both samples used in our study. Since Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing was used to conduct the survey, we could be sure that we had received a direct (although not necessarily unbiased) record of MPs’ personality traits. After their participation in the GPS had been ensured, non-response levels for the Big Five personality test battery were extremely low (1.3% to 1.5% of all respondents), independent of respondents’ hierarchical status in the political elite.

The expectation that personality matters in the process of legislative recruitment and the development of legislators’ policy priorities is based on two assumptions:

- A *Selectivity Hypothesis* which maintains that political elite-status is linked to a display of personality traits that indicate perseverance, strength and

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1 The frequent practice of using mailed questionnaires in elite-research is prone to proxy-responding, because assistants and secretaries are notoriously active in getting rid of unwelcome inquiries to MPs by answering themselves (Jahr 2006).
likeability. The selective mechanisms working here are partially allocated within selectorates – i.e. party and constituency organisations – which choose candidates who – because of their personality – are expected to be an asset in the competition between parties for power. These favourable qualities may have adaptive outwards-effects during campaigns by establishing media relationships or contacts with pressure group organisations, and/or may further the inner workings of parties and parliaments through the provision of efficient organisational work, diligent contribution of legislative expertise, and the skilful pacification of internal party strife. It is, however, not only selectorates and – under the condition of electoral laws which allow for preference voting – electorates that select personalities according to their fitness for office. There are also self-selective mechanisms working within the pool of potential candidates that will produce an elite-masses differential according to personality traits. Ambition, perseverance, and the capability to cope with career insecurity, resistance and harsh competition are all required qualities of professional politicians. Potential contenders who are not sure about their ability to cope with the rigors of a political career are very likely to be deterred from entering the competition for office. The selectivity thesis treats personality as an external criterion when selectorates engage in the process of choosing “good” candidates and as an internal factor activating or de-activating candidates in the process of self-selection. It is also expected that the interplay between internal and external selectivity will work differently for different subcategories or “macro-contexts” (Winter 2003:115) of the population of legislators, and that we will see therefore significant differences in legislators’ personality types between the sexes, regions (in this case, East and West Germany), religious affiliations, and – in particular – parties.

The second assumption, which I call Disposition Hypothesis, establishes a link between legislators’ personalities and their policy preferences. It resumes a fundamental paradigm of political psychology first formulated in classical texts, such as Adorno’s et al. Authoritarian Personality (1950) or Lasswell’s Psychopathology and Politics (1930). Here, personality traits are treated consistently as independent variables “explaining” legislators’ policy preferences. With this approach we are following an established line of political psychology that maintains ‘personality factors affect the arousal and
weighting of leaders’ goals and preferences as well as conflicts and fusions among different goals. Personality affects how leaders respond to (or resist) cues, symbols, and signs; how they interpret ‘stimuli’ and transform them into ‘information’” (Winter 2003:112). The implication is that political choices are not (completely) situational and may be directed (although not necessarily determined) by relatively stable personality traits. However, Winter’s axiomatic statement provides no theoretically grounded clues as to which personality traits might, in a situation of decision-making, lead to which policy preference. A table, linking each of the Big Five trait factors to ‘politically relevant behaviour’ intuitively (ibid:118) exemplifies an approach to the subject (mostly restricted to foreign policy decisions), which is rather inductive and empirical than guided by theoretical consideration. In this situation, F. Greenstein’s (1968:57-61) suggestion to focus on “ego-defence needs” may help to establish a theoretically viable link between personality and political preferences. A similar line of argument was followed by G.D. Wilson (1973) who introduced “generalized fear of uncertainty” as the pivotal variable in his theory of the psychological antecedents of conservatism. The idea here is that fundamental political alternatives like inclusion vs. exclusion, homogenisation vs. pluralisation, or hierarchy vs. equality correspond to differences in salient and socially relevant personality traits. Openness – i.e. being open to new experiences – and Neuroticism – i.e. being (un)able to cope with threat, stress and instability – are among the most obvious candidates. In these terms, a legislator’s preference for a certain policy can be explained as a response to conflicting expectations and a challenging situation that helps him or her to cope with reality and to maintain self-images. According to the disposition hypothesis, policy choices conform to individual policy makers’ psychic needs and are partly directed by their personality traits. Following this hypothesis, there should be a relationship of equivalence between personality traits and policy preferences in that, for example, Neuroticism is positively linked to social protectionism or support for high security policies, whereas Openness should be positively linked, for example, to support for policies which foster elite responsiveness and inclusiveness.
The empirical tests of both hypotheses will proceed in two steps. In step one, the selectivity thesis will be examined by comparing the Big Five personality traits of German MPs gathered in the 2007 wave of the GPS (N=1223; Best et al. 2007) with a representative sample of the whole eligible population obtained from the 2005 wave of the SOEP (N=17,300) and a weighted sample of the SOEP that has been adjusted to the composition of the GPS-population in terms of age, gender and education. Selectivity according to personality traits will be also tested by comparing subgroups or “macro-contexts” of legislative recruitment and careers, such a region of origin (East = former GDR and West = former BRD), religious affiliation, gender, party and backbencher vs. frontbencher-status. The last comparison, backbencher vs. front-bencher-status will allow us to establish whether pursuing intra-parliamentary and/or cabinet careers after legislative recruitment is dependent on a “second order” effect of personality-trait-based selectivity. In the second part of the empirical study, the disposition hypothesis will be tested by determining the effect of Big Five personality traits on legislators’ self-rating using a 10-point left-right scale, and on their preferences in various areas of economic, security, budget, social welfare, gender and science policies. It is expected that, in a situation of protected anonymity, respondents will express their preferences unbiased by tactical considerations and peer-pressure. In this last step of the empirical examination the net effect of disposition after controlling for the effect of party-selectivity will be established.

A comparison of Big Five personality-trait-scores between the 2007 GPS sample and the 2005 SOEP general population sample shows strong support for the hypothesis of a personality-trait-based selectivity taking effect in the process of legislative recruitment. German legislators differ significantly in all five dimensions of personality from the general public. Most of the observed differences point into the expected direction and indicate a greater ability of MPs to cope with the challenges of competition for power and with the strain of office compared to their electorate: MPs show less Neuroticism (or more emotional stability), more Extraversion and more Openness than the General Population. On the other hand, but also plausibly, they are significantly less agreeable than the electorate. This quality might reduce their likeability but it increases their thrust in pursuit of their careers. The only counterintuitive personality-trait score difference concerns Conscientiousness: MPs are significantly less conscientious, i.e. they attribute to themselves less self-discipline and effectiveness than do the general electorate. This comes as a surprise and contradicts the self-image, common among German MPs, of being professional expert-politicians who carry out
their office dutifully and methodically like any other vocation (Best & Jahr 2006). Indeed, Conscientiousness is the only personality trait where the difference between MPs and the adjusted population is actually larger than the difference between MPs and the general population, meaning that MPs are also less conscientious than their peers in educational status, age and gender. Since it would be highly implausible to assume that lack of Conscientiousness is a selective advantage, I suggest that this is a case of negative self-selection. Politics seems to be one of the few viable and attractive careers for ambitious but slightly disorganized contenders. With regard to all other personality traits, mean score-differences decrease if we compare MPs with the adjusted population sample, the reduction being particularly large in the case of Neuroticism and Openness. Nevertheless, we observe statistically highly significant differences in all Big Five personality traits between MPs and their peers in the adjusted population-sample, pointing to a specific “elite factor” in the selection and self-selection for legislative careers.

(Table 1 about here)

Whilst the selectivity thesis has been convincingly confirmed for the act of legislative recruitment, and a distinct “elite factor” in personality-trait selectivity could be found, no such clear pattern appears when we look at the pursuit of parliamentary, governmental and high level party careers after legislative recruitment. With the exception of a slight and hardly significant lead of high-flyers over back-benchers in terms of Extraversion no further significant differences could be found. This finding cannot be attributed to the much smaller number of cases available for intra-elite comparisons smaller, that is, in relation to elite-masses comparisons, since the mean differences found between high-flyers and back-benchers are smaller by order of magnitude compared to differences between elites and masses. It seems that personality factors are only effective when it comes to entering a legislative career but not when it comes to pursuing it to higher levels.

(Table 2 about here)

The effectiveness of personality traits in legislative recruitment is, however, strongly influenced by contextual factors. These effects are particularly and strikingly visible with regard to gender. Female MPs display significantly higher levels of Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Extraversion as compared to their male colleagues, particularly with
regard to Extraversion and Conscientiousness. In these terms, women seem to be the “better” MPs, even being responsible for somewhat making up for the general deficit in Conscientiousness of MPs against the electorate. This finding can only partly be interpreted as an “import” of general gender differences from mass-level to elite-level. Whilst we also find higher levels of female as compared to male Extraversion and Agreeableness in the general population, no such difference between men and women is found at general population level with regard to Conscientiousness. Here we have an elite-specific gender difference that can be plausibly explained by a compensatory effect of higher female Conscientiousness, making up for mechanisms still discriminating against women in legislative recruitment. It may also compensate for the significantly higher level of Neuroticism shown by female MPs, although the difference here is much smaller than at the general population level.

Significant macro-contextual effects are also found with regard to regional origin. MPs with a background in the former communist German Democratic Republic show significantly higher levels of Neuroticism and Agreeableness than their colleagues with West-German backgrounds. Here we find also a combination between an elite-specific effect and an “import” of regional personality differences from general population level into the political elite. Whilst the general East German population shows only a spuriously higher level of Agreeableness than West Germans, which is only statistically significant because of the very large number of cases in the SOEP-survey, East German MPs are markedly more agreeable than their West German colleagues. “To be nice” seems to be a positive selection criterion for legislative recruitment in the East German as compared to the West German macro-context. On the other hand is the significantly higher level of Neuroticism among East German MPs at least partly “imported” to elite-level from mass-level because we find the same difference – although to a lesser extent – in the East German electorate as well. This result shows that macro-contexts of legislative recruitment, like gender and region are indeed generating group-specific patterns of personality traits of legislators by transmitting and sometimes transforming them on their way through different systemic levels of the polity. It can also be said that not all macro-contexts have this generic effect. For example, we found no significant personality differences between MPs with different religious affiliations.

As the main agents in the processes of parliamentary candidate selection and political careers promotion, and as the focal institutions for the coordination of parliamentary decision-making, parties are the by far most important macro-contexts for legislators in modern
democracies. The question whether persons selected or attracted by a particular party to serve as legislators differ in their personality traits from colleagues in other parties and from the following of their party is, therefore, of particular relevance for our study. The answer to the first part of the question is a cautious yes: there are statistically significant between-party differences with regard to the personality of their legislators, but they apply only to three of the Big Five – i.e. Neuroticism, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness – and they concern mainly two “outlier parties”, the PDS (New Left/Post Communist) and the FDP (Liberals). The most distinct pattern of party-group differences can be found in the personality trait dimension of Neuroticism: PDS-Legislators show significantly higher levels of Neuroticism than MPs from all other parties, whilst the legislators of the FDP have an inverse profile – significantly lower levels of Neuroticism than all other parties, except for the Greens. The polarity between Post-communist/New Left MPs and their liberal colleagues in their levels of Neuroticism suggests that ideological antagonisms, such as individualism vs. collectivism, or state-care and state intervention vs. personal responsibility and self-determination, may be based on a divergence of personality traits related to individuals’ ability to cope with stress or their disposition to anxiety. There are only two other significant group-differences that can be attributed to party-selectivity of personalities: PDS-legislators show a significantly higher level of Agreeableness than Social Democrat (SPD)-legislators, and Christian Democrat (CDU)-MPs display a significantly higher level of Conscientiousness than their colleagues from the SPD. For both group differences, there seems to be no obvious explanation in terms of corresponding or complementary ideologemes.

The second part of the question refers to party-specific personality-trait differences between legislators and the electorate. Here we want to examine whether there is a correspondence between the partisans and politicians of a party in terms of personality traits, or whether the same elite vs. electorate gap we have discussed earlier can be also found at party level. To answer this question we have included only those respondents at mass level who gave a party identification and compared them with the MPs of the corresponding party. “Personality representativeness” or “leader-follower match” (Winter 1987) is assumed when there is no significant difference of a personality trait score between the partisans and the representatives of a party. However, a series of 25 T-Tests for partisans-elite differentials within parties identified only four non-significant differences, thereby confirming strongly that personality-selectivity in the process of elite formation is basically about creating elite vs. masses gap and not about establishing a link of representativeness between party elites and their following in
terms of personality traits. Elite-partisans differences at party level mirror what we have seen earlier in the comparison between MPs and the general and adjusted population samples: MPs show higher levels of Openness and Extraversion, while their following score more highly on Conscientiousness and Agreeableness. A reservation has to be made, however, with regard to Neuroticism where, in three of the five parties (CDU/CSU, SPD, PDS), differences between elites and their followers are not significant and are only borderline for the other two (Greens, FDP). In the case of the PDS we even observe a change of sign of the Neuroticism-score difference: PDS MPs show a higher level of Neuroticism than their following, although this inversion of the general elite vs. masses differential does not attain statistical significance. With regard to Neuroticism we suggest to attribute personality-representativeness to a leader-follower match on psychological characteristics (Winter 1987), creating a specific appeal of or for representatives who share the confidence or anxiety of their followers. This mechanism might also explain the inversion of the elite-masses differential observed for the PDS, which addressed an East German electorate particularly concerned about the course and consequences of reunification. The special significance of a leader-follower-match in an East German environment may also help to explain why we also find the only other non-significant elite-masses differential in a PDS party-context, where PDS representatives and supporters show the same (raised) level of Agreeableness.

The study of inter-party differences of personality traits shifted the focus of our analyses into the direction of the Disposition Hypothesis, because – without further evidence – the observed differences can be interpreted as either (or both) the result of party-specific selection mechanisms favouring or disfavouring certain personality types, or of a personality-driven affiliation to one or another party by potential contenders for legislative offices. The interpretation of the data in terms of selectivity is supported by the fact that in four out of five T-tests we found significant personality differences between the legislators and the followers of a party, whereas the disposition-thesis is supported by the fact that within parties the signs of deviations from mean Big Five-scores are equal for legislators and followers. These findings show that followers and legislators of a party have similar personality profiles, but that these profiles tend to be significantly more marked among representatives. It seems that, when it comes to legislative recruitment selectivity and disposition are normally working into the same direction. The impact of personality on political orientations and behaviour of legislators will, therefore, be at least partly mediated by party affiliations and their
behavioural consequences. Therefore, for the purpose of examining the “net” effects of personality traits on policy orientations, party affiliation should be controlled for.

Our analysis of the impact of personality traits on political orientations starts with correlation analyses of Big Five-scores with the scale values of self-ratings of MPs and the general population on a 10-point, left-right, scale. Here, results show a consistent but weak pattern of associations: The further respondents in both groups place themselves on the left, the higher their levels of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness and Agreeableness, and the lower their level of Conscientiousness. Correlation-coefficients are low and – at elite level – statistically insignificant or borderline. In both groups none of the correlation coefficients comes even near the .10 threshold. Left-right orientation of representative elites and the general public are influenced but nowhere near determined, by personality traits. The accumulated contribution of the Big Five to explain left-right self-ratings attains 2% ($R^2 = 0.019$) in the case of representative elites and 1% ($R^2 = 0.007$) in the case of ordinary citizens. With regard to personality-related predispositions, elites and citizens alike are free to choose their positions on a right-left continuum.

This indifference may be at least partly owed to the fuzziness of the left-right reference and its decreasing distinctiveness in terms of a self-positioning in a political space (Mair 2007). We expect, however, that “functionally affine” personality traits will predispose representative elites to support or reject specific policies. The clearest evidence for a specific impact of personality traits on policy preferences is provided by the readiness to curb fundamental civil rights because of the threat of terrorism. After controlling for party-affiliations and the effects of other personality traits, we observe small but significant positive (net) effects of Neuroticism (BETA = 0.07) and Conscientiousness (BETA 0.08). Significant positive (net) effects of Conscientiousness can be also found on agreement to policies to reallocate responsibility for social security to individual citizens (BETA = 0.05) and on the rejection of policies of affirmative action and quota systems to raise the share of women in legislatures (BETA = 0.05). Neuroticism has a significant negative effect on the propensity to introduce referenda (BETA = -0.5). No significant personality-effects could be found for policies to promote social equality, to ban stem-cell research, or to curb immigration from Non-EU countries. All in all, the evidence for a disposition of policy preferences by personality traits is weak and only partly consistent with our initial hypothesis. It would seem it is not Openness but Conscientiousness that goes along with Neuroticism as the most important effect of
personality on policy-preferences. Nevertheless, in these findings one can see support for the assumption that personality traits have an independent effect on legislators’ policy preferences (independent of the indirect influence of personality traits which is mediated via party affiliation) and that this effect originates from ego-defence. Neuroticism and Conscientiousness are both related to the ability to cope with threatening situations and to put imperfect things to order. It is therefore in accordance with the ego-defence thesis that MPs’ attitudes towards policies that affect peoples’ efficacy and the ability of the polity to cope with internal or external threats are influenced by “corresponding” personality traits.

A final examination of personality-effects concerns representatives’ satisfaction with democracy and their legislative roles. In both cases we find relatively strong net effects of personality traits: Neuroticism is negatively associated with satisfaction with democracy (BETA = 0.10). Extraversion and Openness is positively related to legislative self-efficacy, i.e. the statement that the activity of an individual legislator has a political impact (BETA = .06; BETA = .08). In the last mentioned model, back-bencher-status and opposition-status were introduced as additional control variables: contrary to expectations, neither had a significant effect.

Does personality matter? The initial research question of this paper can be answered with a resounding “yes” when it comes to legislative recruitment. German MPs differ significantly from their electorate when one looks at personality traits from the Big Five-inventory. Evidence gathered from computer assisted telephone interviews indicated significantly higher levels of emotional stability, Openness, and Extraversion, but lower levels of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness for MPs compared to the general (eligible) population. The same significant differences are reproduced when one compares MPs with a population sample adjusted in terms education, gender and age to the elite sample. I have interpreted these results and their stability between both control groups as an indication for the presence of a specific “elite factor” in the process of legislative recruitment. This factor operates in interplay of self-selective and heteronomous mechanisms which favour those individuals from pools of potential contenders who ascribe to themselves or are seen by the selectorates as having advantageous mental qualities in the competition for legislative offices. The set of favourable personality traits may even include “negative” qualities like Antagonism if such characteristics help in the competition for power. The only result which does not conform to this interpretation is the lower level of Conscientiousness among MPs as compared to both
control groups. It is hard to understand what competitive advantage a lack of self discipline and direction should entail in the competition for legislative offices. I have explained this deviant finding with an effect of negative self-selection, whereby contenders who are otherwise qualified for elite positions, but who are deficient in Conscientiousness, opt for a political career because deficient task fulfilment is easier to conceal in the chaos of political bustle than, for example, in a senior management or academic position where achievement is easier to observe and to measure. Progressing ones political careers beyond a mere seat in the chamber does not entail further personality-selectivity, except for a somewhat higher level of Extraversion. In different “Macro-Contexts”, such as region (East-West Germany) and for both sexes’ particular regimes of personality-selectivity become effective, although without over-riding the general pattern of elite-masses differentials described earlier. With some qualification, this also applies to differences between parties. Only with regard to Neuroticism do we find an indication of a “leader-follower match”; with regard to all other personality traits, we see the same elite-masses differential between followers and legislators of singular parties as found between the universe of legislators and the constituency at large. The stability of the fundamental patterns of Big Five differentials indicates a strong and comprehensive regime of personality selectivity working in legislative recruitment and having a decisive effect on shaping the German and presumably any other polity. Findings for the impact of personality traits on legislators’ policy preferences are less conclusive and consistent. We have, however, found some evidence that MPs’ levels of self-efficacy and anxiety are linked to their support to curbing free economic and – in the case of affirmative action – political competition, or to restricting civil rights in view of the threat of terrorism. These findings indicate that it is not only the input of political personnel into parliaments but also the policy output of legislatures which is affected by MPs’ personality traits.

References


Lasswell, Harold D. (1930), *Psychopathology and Politics*, Chicago:


Tab. 1: Big Five personality trait differences between German MPs and the eligible population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Trait</th>
<th>MPs-Eligible Population</th>
<th>MP-s-adjusted Population*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean difference</td>
<td>sig.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>-0.759</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>0.970</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>0.891</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>-0.724</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Sample of eligible population adjusted to MPs sample in terms of age, gender, and education.

Tab. 2: Intra elite group differences of Big Five personality traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Trait</th>
<th>High flyers vs. Back-benchers</th>
<th>Women vs. men</th>
<th>East German vs. West Germans</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean difference</td>
<td>sig.</td>
<td>Mean difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>-0.186</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>0.292</td>
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<td>Extraversion</td>
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<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.762</td>
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<td>Openness</td>
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<td>n.s.</td>
<td>0.085</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
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<td>n.s.</td>
<td>0.564</td>
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