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CHAPTER

36 Personality, Motives, and Political Participation

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Abstract

This chapter reviews and discusses research on personality, motives, and political participation. It introduces the concepts of personality and motives and discusses their role within participation research. In particular, the literature on personality traits (“Big Five”) and civic engagement is summarized showing that openness to experience and extraversion are the most important correlates of political participation. Regarding motives, the focus is on the role of political interest, political knowledge, political efficacy, and partisanship as factors that promote political action. Beyond reviewing the existing literature, the chapter argues that the link between psychological factors, like personality traits and motives, and political participation is likely to be context dependent. Empirical analyses shown in this chapter lend support to this argument.

Keywords: [personality](#), [personality traits](#), [Big Five](#), [motives](#), [participation](#), [political behavior](#), [civic engagement](#), [political psychology](#), [psychology](#), [context](#)

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Within recent decades, we have seen a growing interest in the psychological foundations of political behavior. Studying political action through the lens of psychology enriches our understanding of how and why ordinary citizens engage in politics (see Chapters 4 and 9 by Duncan, and by Renström and Bäck in this volume). Personality traits, values, norms, motives, and emotions drive individual behavior in all kinds of situations, from private interaction over behavior in working life to political behavior (see Chapters 37, 38 and 39 by Heath et al., Jasper and Zhelnina and Nai in this volume). Considering these psychological aspects in the study of political action enables us to dig deeper into inter-individual differences in civic engagement. The idea can be traced back to the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) (Brady et al. 1995; Verba et al. 1995), which is still one of the standard models to explain participation. Summarizing their argument, Brady and

co-authors (1995: 271) write that people do not take part in politics “because they can’t, because they do not want or because they are not asked”. While the first part refers to resources and the last part to networks, the psychological argument lies in the middle: some people want to take part in politics, while others do not want to. Verba and colleagues (1995: 272) call this prerequisite of political participation “psychological engagement with politics”. In the CVM, psychological engagement is limited to motives that drive participation. In light of recent research from political psychology, it is worthwhile to broaden the perspective and incorporate personality traits as more general psychological factors into the analysis of political action (Mondak 2010: 177). Within trait theory, personality traits are “dimensions of individual differences in tendencies to show consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions” (McCrae and Costa 2003: 25). Meanwhile, motives can be understood as “the specific reasons for action” (Franzese 2013: 281). Thus, in participation research, motives describe concrete reasons, like political interest or norms, which push people into politics (Giugni and Grasso 2019).

p. 615 In this chapter, I will focus on personality traits as general and motives as specific psychological foundations of political participation. I will summarize conceptual and theoretical approaches as well as empirical findings. Furthermore, I will discuss the interaction of ↴ individual psychological factors and contextual surroundings and present original empirical evidence on this.

The Concept of Personality

Following Caprara and Vecchione (2013), personality is a “dynamic system of psychological structures and processes that mediates the relationship between the individual and the environment and accounts for what a person is and may become.” Psychological research offers different approaches to personality. Trait theory, which has found its way into the study of political behavior, assumes that traits form the core of an individual’s personality and have to be distinguished from less stable factors, like habits, values, or attitudes (Allport 1931). Building on the so-called lexical approach, which argues that important personality differences are reflected in our everyday language, five clusters or superior traits (“Big Five”) have been identified and confirmed in numerous studies. Their names largely persist until today: Openness to Experience (earlier name: Culture), Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (or its counterpart: Emotional Stability). According to the Five-Factor Model (FFM) by Costa and McCrae (1992), each trait is described by six facets, as shown in Table 36.1. The facets can also function as short descriptions of the traits’ substance.

The FFM has been validated using different methods as well as peer-ratings and observer-ratings (McCrae and Costa 1987). Furthermore, studies have shown that it persists across different countries and cultures (e.g., McCrae and Costa 1997). Concerning intrapersonal stability, traits can be understood as “relatively stable” (McCrae and Costa 2008: 167) over the life course, given their biological basis. Yet, psychological research shows that processes of maturation and life experiences can lead to changes in personality (e.g., Specht et al. 2011).

Personality and Political Participation

In the study of personality and politics, political participation plays a prominent role. Scholars have found that psychological dispositions are relevant correlates of political action and can enrich the standard models to explain civic engagement (Cawvey et al. 2017; Mondak 2010). From a theoretical point of view, it is particularly fruitful to take the nature of different forms of participation into account when thinking about the explanatory power of personality traits (Mondak 2010: 177). As psychological research suggests, personality traits have a motivational core and—at least partly—relate to basic motivational systems of approach and avoidance (Corr et al. 2013). Thus, we can argue that individuals are likely to choose the form of political participation that caters to their psychological needs.

p. 616 Theoretical expectations and empirical findings are particularly clear-cut for two traits that seem to be the strongest correlates of political action: openness to experience and extraversion. Individuals scoring high on *openness to experience* will participate in politics if it promises new input, new experiences, and intellectual stimuli. Thus, they might particularly value forms of participation that have an unconventional and innovative character, for instance online participation, political protests, and deliberative citizen assemblies ↵ (Mondak and Halperin 2008: 342). Traditional forms of participation, like voting, might be less appealing to individuals scoring high on openness. Empirical findings are largely in accordance with these expectations. Openness to experience and various forms of political action are significantly positively associated (Gerber et al. 2011; Ha et al. 2013; Mondak 2010; Mondak et al. 2010; Russo and Amnå 2016b). In particular, openness to experience is a strong correlate of non-electoral political participation (Ackermann 2017a; Ackermann and Gundelach 2020; Brandstätter and Opp 2014; Lindell and Strandberg 2018). Meanwhile, the findings for voting are mixed and some studies could not prove significant links between openness to experience and turnout (Gerber et al. 2011; Weinschenk 2013).

Table 36.1 The Five-Factor Model of Personality (FFM)

Trait	Short Definition	Facets
Openness to Experience	“[...] describes the breadth, depth, originality, and complexity of an individual’s mental and experiential life.” (John et al. 2008: 138)	Fantasy Aesthetics Feelings Actions Ideas Values
Conscientiousness	“[...] describes socially prescribed impulse control that facilitates task- and goal- oriented behavior [...]” (John et al. 2008: 138)	Competence Order Dutifulness Achievement Striving Self-Discipline Deliberation
Extraversion	“[...] implies an energetic approach toward the social and material world [...]” (John et al. 2008: 138)	Warmth Gregariousness Assertiveness Activity Excitement Seeking Positive Emotions
Agreeableness	“[...] contrasts a prosocial and communal orientation toward others with antagonism [...]” (John et al. 2008: 138)	Trust Straightforwardness Altruism Compliance Modesty Tender-Mindedness
Neuroticism	“[...] contrasts emotional stability and even-temperedness with negative emotionality [...]” (John et al. 2008: 138)	Anxiety Angry Hostility Depression Self-Consciousness Impulsiveness Vulnerability

Source: Ackermann (2017b), based on John et al. (2008).

Individuals that show high levels of *extraversion* should particularly enjoy social forms of political action. They value political participation as an opportunity for interaction. Thus, we can expect them to engage in collective forms of action, like party work, campaigning, or demonstrations (Mondak 2010: 57; Mondak and Halperin 2008: 344). Individualized forms of participation, such as voting or political consumerism, are expected to be less attractive to extroverts (Cawvey et al. 2017: 11). Empirically, extraversion shows significantly positive correlations with different types of political participation, but most strongly so with social forms of political action (Ackermann 2017a; Dinesen et al. 2014; Gerber et al. 2011; Johann et al. 2020; Lindell and Strandberg 2018; Mondak 2010; Mondak et al. 2010; Mondak and Halperin 2008; Weinschenk 2013; Weinschenk 2017). Some studies, however, also report a positive relationship between extraversion and voting (Gerber et al. 2011; Weinschenk 2013). Gerber and colleagues (2011) use validated turnout data in their study, which makes their finding of a positive relationship particularly convincing. The existence of strong social norms and peer pressure are possible explanations for the link between extraversion and voting, a rather individualized form of political action.

Concerning the remaining three traits of the Big Five, the theoretical expectations are less clear. Individuals scoring high on *conscientiousness* are described as dutiful and norm abiding. At the same time, they are output-oriented and efficient. Thus, we expect that they just engage in politics if they perceive it as their duty to do so or if they assume they will benefit from it (Mondak 2010: 55). This makes the formulation of clear hypotheses a complicated endeavor. Voting, for instance, is perceived as a duty in many societies but does not reveal immediate benefits in the sense of favorable policy outcomes. In any way, feelings of duty, benefit, and efficacy should be considered as necessary preconditions for conscientious individuals to engage politically (Mondak and Halperin 2008: 343). Therefore, we do not expect strong correlations between conscientiousness and political participation. Regarding alternative and non-institutionalized forms of political action, we might even expect a negative relationship. Empirical studies suggest that, indeed, the link between conscientiousness and participation is largely conditional. First, it depends on the nature of political action. Conscientiousness is negatively related to non-institutionalized forms of participation (Ackermann and Gundelach 2020; Mondak 2010; Mondak et al. 2010; Russo and Amnå 2016b). Meanwhile, some studies find a positive link with electoral participation (Johann et al. 2020). Second, it depends on feelings of duty and efficacy (Mondak 2010).

Individuals who score high on *agreeableness* tend to avoid conflicts and strive for harmonic relationships with others. They are expected to be less active in politics, particularly in rather conflictive forms like strikes or protests (Mondak 2010: 61; Mondak and Halperin 2008: 346). Several empirical studies show that these assumptions hold: there is no systematic link between agreeableness and voting (Mondak 2010; Mondak and Halperin 2008). Evidence on political activities at the local level indicates even a negative relationship, suggesting that agreeable persons try to avoid conflicts in their immediate surroundings (Gerber et al. 2011). Consistent findings of a negative link between agreeableness and participation in protests (Brandstätter and Opp 2014; Ha et al. 2013; Weinschenk 2017) and deliberative and expressive activities (Lindell and Strandberg 2018; Russo and Amnå 2016b) point in the same direction.

Finally, there are no clear expectations for *neuroticism*. Emotions like anger might draw less emotionally stable individuals into political action, but at the same time, fear and depression might also turn them away (Mondak 2010: 63). In particular, group-based forms of political action might require a certain level of emotional stability (Mondak and Halperin 2008: 345). Yet, the empirical findings on neuroticism and political action are rather inconsistent. Studies indicate that individuals scoring highly on emotional stability (that is low on neuroticism) are more likely to vote (Gerber et al. 2011; Schoen and Steinbrecher 2013). Other studies cannot confirm this (Mondak et al. 2010; Weinschenk 2013) or even show negative links between emotional stability and non-electoral forms of participation (Ha et al. 2013; Mondak 2010; Mondak et al. 2010).

In conclusion, the empirical studies on personality and participation identify openness to experience and extraversion as the most important correlates of political action. For the remaining three traits of the FFM—conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism—the patterns differ across studies. One reason is that the link between these traits and political action is dependent on the form of political action. Another potential explanation for varying patterns is the role of contextual factors that might lead to diverging results across single-country studies.

The Concept of Motives

While the literature on personality and political participation centers around the concept of the Big Five personality traits, the conceptualization of motives in civic engagement research is less clear. No standard model of motives exists and the relation to psychological research is less vivid. Most of the work is still very much influenced by the aspects that Verba and colleagues (1995) have studied as psychological engagement in the CVM: political interest, political efficacy, political knowledge¹ and partisanship. Besides, specific motives are studied depending on the form of participation. For instance, feeling a duty to vote is a well-researched motive of *electoral participation* (e.g., Blais et al. 2019; Blais and Daoust 2020; Blais and Galais 2016; Blais and Rubenson 2013; Galais and Blais 2016). With regard to *partisan activities*, incentive-based models dominate the field (Bruter and Harrison 2009; Clark and Wilson 1961; Costantini and King 1984; Seyd and Whiteley 1992; Whiteley et al. 1994; Whiteley and Seyd 1998). The general incentives model, for instance, distinguishes between selective and collective incentives. While the former are individual, such as personal benefits or ideological incentives, the latter refer to the efficacy of the group to reach a policy goal (Seyd and Whiteley 1992; Whiteley et al. 1994; Whiteley and Seyd 1998). The assumption that incentives or instrumental considerations motivate political action is also prominent in the *social movements* literature (Klandermans 1984, 2013, 2015; Klandermans and Oegema 1987). Klandermans (2015) describes three motives that are key for participation in social movements: instrumentality, identity, and ideology. Thus, the striving for social and political change (instrumentality), group membership (identity), or moral and political convictions (ideology) might motivate participation in social movements. Instrumentality can also be a driver for rather individualized *cause-oriented forms of participation*, like political consumerism. For instance, recent research on veganism as a subdomain of political consumerism shows that caring about animal welfare and the environment are the most relevant motives for this kind of participation (Kalte 2021).

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Motives and Political Participation

Since there is no unified conceptualization of motives of political participation, the following overview of the empirical findings relies very much on what Verba and colleagues (1995) have studied as psychological engagement. Theoretically, they assume that the four aspects under study—political interest, political efficacy, political knowledge, and partisanship—increase the desire to participate in politics, and equip individuals with the necessary knowledge and self-confidence to do so (Verba et al. 1995: 343 ff.).

The finding that *political interest* is a key motive of political participation seems to be one of the most certain findings of civic engagement research. Accordingly, since the seminal writings on the CVM (Brady et al. 1995; Verba et al. 1995), which underscore the importance of political interest, only a few studies have put the spotlight on political interest as an explanatory variable (Blais and St-Vincent 2011). Mostly, it is used as a control variable or as one explanation among many. Various meta-analyses in participation research also emphasize the positive link between political interest and different forms of participation (Copeland and Boulianne 2020; Smets and van Ham 2013). As research on digital media use and civic engagement shows,

political interest is not only directly linked to political action, but it also moderates the effect of other explanations (Bimber et al. 2014). Yet, not only the level of political interest matters for participation but also the level of *political knowledge*. Studies show that those who are informed and knowledgeable about public affairs and politics are more likely to actively engage in politics (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Galston 2001). Concerning *political efficacy*, early work by Finkel (1985, 1987) emphasizes that the relationship between efficacy and political participation is reciprocal. Particularly, active engagement in politics seems to strengthen external efficacy, which captures the feeling of being heard by politicians. Thus, political efficacy is not only a motive for political participation but also a consequence of becoming active. This finding is also supported by more recent research focusing on adolescents (Quintelier and Van Deth 2014). Finally, existing research supports the assumption that *partisanship* functions as a motive for political participation (Bankert 2021; Fowler and Kam 2007). It can be considered an instrumental motive for political action because party affiliates try to influence public affairs according to their party's goals. In the polarized context of the US, it might even be negative affect towards the opposing party rather than support for the own party that strengthens participation (Iyengar and Krupenkin 2018).

In sum, the positive link between the aspects of psychological engagement, which Verba and colleagues (1995) discuss as the motivational basis of political participation, and different forms of political action is well documented in the empirical literature. Yet, the question of causality should be kept in mind when reviewing this literature. Several studies point to reciprocal relationships (Finkel 1985, 1987; Quintelier and Van Deth 2014). Furthermore, a recent study by Weinschnek and colleagues (2021) indicates that political interest, efficacy, and knowledge on the one hand and political participation on the other hand might share the same biological roots. Thus, it would be common underlying biological factors that bring about the positive relationship instead of the motives themselves.

The Role of Context and Situation

p. 620

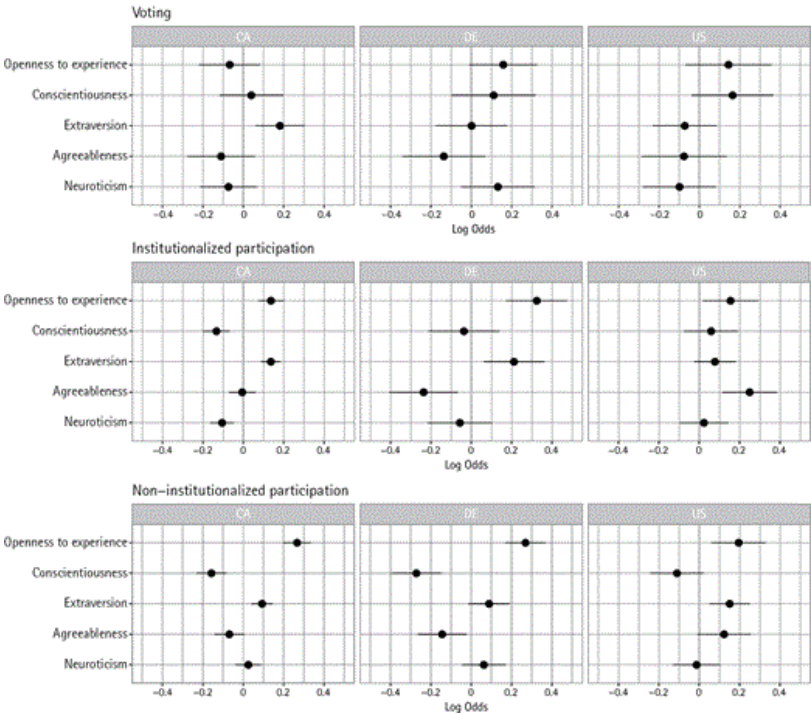
Hitherto, I have considered the dispositional and motivational antecedents of political participation in isolation. However, we know from psychological theory and research that psychological factors interact with situational and contextual circumstances in shaping individual behavior (McGraw 2006). Mondak and colleagues (2010: 87) have identified this perspective of a person–context interaction as enormously fruitful for the study of personality and politics. Many others have followed the call for moving beyond simple direct relationships between personality and participation. The studies can be divided into two larger categories. First, several studies focus on the interaction between personality traits and individual demographic factors, like age or gender, or other individual factors, like political interest (Furnham and Cheng 2019; Mattila et al. 2011; Quintelier 2014; Wang 2014). The second segment of studies focuses on the interaction of personality and situational aspects, such as experimental treatments during campaigns, perceived campaign importance, social media use, political discussions, or network size (Dawkins 2017; Gerber et al. 2013; Kim et al. 2013; Mondak et al. 2010; Russo and Amnå 2016a; Weinschenk and Panagopoulos 2014), or structural contexts, like political institutions (Ackermann 2017a).

Against this backdrop, I argue that it is valuable to consider the conditionality of the link between psychological factors and civic engagement theoretically and empirically. The key question is under which circumstances individual psychological factors, like personality traits or motives, materialize in civic engagement. I argue that two mechanisms should be considered: activation and compensation. First, situational or contextual factors might *activate* traits and motives that are favorable for political participation. Thereby, they strengthen the link between these psychological factors and political activism. To give an example, strong participatory institutions that offer many possibilities for activism might turn the political arena into a lively context that attracts extroverts even more strongly. Thus, participatory institutions might further activate this trait and amplify the link between extraversion and participation.

Second, situational or contextual factors that are themselves favorable for political participation might *compensate* for a lack of motivation. Thereby, they narrow the participation gap between highly motivated and unmotivated citizens. To stick to the example of participatory institutions, such a context favorable to political activism might normalize political participation and render strong motives, like political interest or efficacy, less important as antecedents for political participation.

In the following, I will conduct two exploratory empirical analyses to exemplify this argument.² The first analysis examines whether the link between personality traits and political participation varies across three different countries. Due to a lack of large-scale comparative data on personality traits in public opinion surveys, I have to rely on this simple comparative approach. I use data from the Canadian (Stephenson et al. 2020), German (GLES 2019), and US (ANES 2017) election studies 2016–2019 that have all included a measure of personality. Indices for the Big Five personality traits serve as main independent variables; as the dependent variable, I distinguish between voting, institutionalized participation, and non-institutionalized participation.³ Figure 36.1 reveals interesting insights regarding the consistency and variability of personality effects across countries. On the one hand, some relationships are stable over the three contexts. Openness to experience is, for instance, positively related to institutionalized and non-institutionalized participation but not to voting in each country. Conscientiousness is negatively related to non-institutionalized participation in Canada and Germany and slightly misses significance in the US. On the other hand, some relationships are inconsistent across the contexts. Most strikingly, agreeableness is negatively related to institutionalized participation in Germany and positively in the US. I can only speculate about the reasons for varying relationships. They might be rooted in institutional or societal differences that activate agreeable persons for participation in the US and deactivate them in Germany. Yet, due to a lack of comparative data sets including the Big Five personality traits, I cannot put these contextual explanations to a severe empirical test.

Figure 36.1

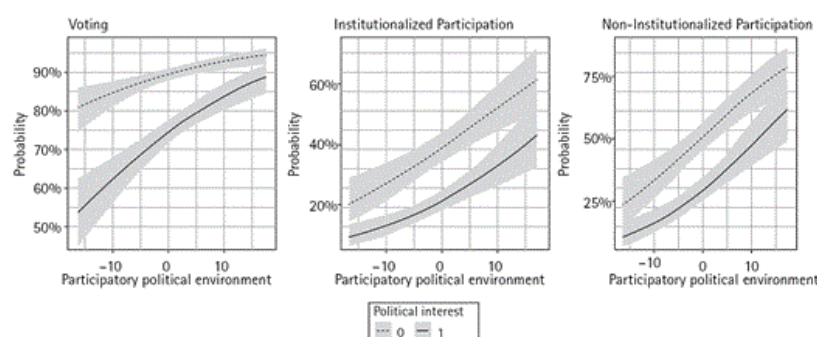


Big Five Personality Traits and Political Participation

Note: The plot is based on logistic regression models using data from the Canadian (Stephenson et al. 2020), German (GLES 2019) and US (ANES 2017) election studies. It shows the regression coefficients (dots) and the 95% confidence intervals (horizontal lines). Age, gender, and education are control variables in the models.

A strict empirical test of the interaction hypothesis is, however, possible when studying the link between motives and political participation. In the following, I will use data from the European Social Survey (ESS) 2018, which is combined with contextual variables from the Democracy Barometer data set (Engler et al. 2020).⁴ I study the interaction of political interest and the participatory nature of the political environment to test the compensation argument. More precisely, I test whether a participatory political environment can compensate for a lack of political interest.⁵ The contextual variable “participatory political environment” captures the degree of equality and effectiveness of participatory rules and opportunities in a country (Bühlmann et al. 2011). Overall, the data set comprises 39,669 individuals and 23 countries. Figure 36.2 illustrates the results and lends partial support to the compensation thesis. A highly participatory environment is able to close the gap in voting propensities between politically interested and non-interested citizens. For institutionalized and non-institutionalized participation, a participatory environment increases participation for both interested and non-interested citizens. Thus, a participatory environment cannot close the gap in these cases.

Figure 36.2



Political Interest, Participatory Political Environment, and Political Participation

Note: The plot is based on multilevel logistic regression models using data from ESS round 8 and from the Democracy Barometer 2014. It shows the predicted probabilities for political participation depending on the level of political interest (0 = low, 1 = high) and the nature of the political environment (higher values = high levels of equality and effectiveness in participation). Age, gender, and education are control variables on the individual level.

p. 623 Overall, these simple tests of the person–context interaction argument illustrate its empirical relevance. Citizens do not decide in isolation whether to participate or not to participate in politics. Rather, their engagement decisions depend on their social surroundings and their political environment. Thus, individual dispositions and motives will affect participation conditional on contextual factors.

Conclusion

This chapter gives an overview of the study of personality and motives as antecedents of political participation. It outlines theoretical considerations and summarizes empirical findings. Although both personality traits and motives are psychological correlates of civic engagement, a major difference in the study of these relationships becomes obvious. While motives are well embedded in the standard models of civic engagement, this line of research often lacks interdisciplinary ties to psychological approaches. In contrast, the literature on personality and political participation is well connected to psychology but only weakly related to other explanations of participation in political behavior research. In conclusion, the stronger integration of psychology and political science in the analysis of political participation represents the central desideratum of this branch of research.

Concerning the study of personality and political action, the innovative potential lies in “moving beyond [...] direct effects”, as Mondak (2010: 185) already noted a decade ago. At the same time, this promises greater integration with political science models for explaining participation. Three avenues are promising in this regard. *First*, interactions of personality and other correlates of political participation should be put in the spotlight. Developing theoretical arguments in terms of trait activation and compensation might be a fruitful pathway. This includes the interaction with contextual factors and individual characteristics, such as motives, resources, and sociodemographic factors. Existing research shows that the link between personality and political action potentially differs, for instance, by age (Mattila et al. 2011), gender (Wang 2014), and political interest (Quintelier 2014). In one of the few attempts to study personality and participation in a cross-national comparison, Weinschenk (2017) reports differential relationships across countries but does not further investigate these differences. Using a subnational comparison, Ackermann (2017a) illustrates how we can make sense of differential effects across political contexts. This study shows that the link between openness to experience and protest participation depends on the level of direct democracy in a canton. Thus, studying interactions between political institutions and personality traits seems a fruitful avenue. The simple three-country comparison (see Figure 36.1) in this chapter also supports this claim. Yet, to move research on personality and politics further in this direction, the availability of high-quality comparative data on personality in different parts of the world is a precondition. At this point, this data is not available although suitable short scales to measure the Big Five personality traits have been developed (Gosling et al. 2003; Hahn et al. 2012; Rammstedt and John 2007). *Second*, disentangling the mechanisms between personality traits and political action seems a fruitful avenue for the study of personality and politics. This could lead to a stronger integration with standard models of civic engagement research. Several examples point in this direction and illustrate the role of motives, like political interest, duty to vote, or political efficacy, as mediating factors (Gallego and Oberski 2012; Mondak et al. 2010; Russo and Amnå 2016b; Schoen and Steinbrecher 2013). Another approach to better understand the mechanisms is to disaggregate personality traits and to focus on the relevance of single facets for political action. Hitherto, this approach is less common in studies using the Big Five personality traits than in studies operating with alternative personality models (Chen et al. 2021; Fazekas and Hatemi 2020). *Third*, and related to the former aspect, alternative personality models could advance our understanding of personality and politics. This review has focused on research using the Big Five Model of personality, which is an encompassing model of personality characterized by its breadth and neutrality. Yet, recent research shows that it might be fruitful to broaden the perspective and include alternative models of personality, which are particularly relevant in the political arena. Particularly, the Dark Triad, which only captures malevolent characteristics of individuals, namely narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy, has been receiving increasing attention in political behavior research recently (Chen et al. 2021; Fazekas and Hatemi 2020).

While motives are one of the classical explanations of civic engagement in the political science literature, the potential for innovation lies in a stronger link to psychological research. In psychology, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is one of the most established accounts to study the motives of individual action (Deci and Ryan 1985, 2000; Ryan and Deci 2000). It distinguishes between autonomous and controlled motivation. Autonomous motivation resembles intrinsic and internalized motivation, while controlled motivation describes externally induced extrinsic motivation. Concerning intrinsic or internalized motivation, SDT assumes that individuals carry three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—and strive for their satisfaction (Deci and Ryan 2008). Thus, motivation for behavior is grounded in the satisfaction of these basic psychological needs. SDT as a general theory of motivation seems to be easily connectable to political science research on motives and political behavior. Yet, surprisingly few studies reflect on SDT in political behavior research (for exceptions see e.g., Lilleker and Koc-Michalska 2017; Russo and Stattin 2017; Wuttke 2020a, 2020b). Beyond the SDT, other psychological theories, like the expectancy-value model (see e.g., Levy and Akiva 2019), or approaches that explicitly bridge psychology and political science, as the model of core motivations suggested by van

Zomeren (2016), might be promising avenues. Overall, stronger integration of psychological and political science approaches to motives has the potential to significantly advance this literature.

In conclusion, the discussion of existing theoretical models and empirical findings, as well as desiderata in the study of personality and motives, emphasizes the importance of broadening perspectives in participation research. Concepts and theories from neighboring disciplines, such as psychology, can enhance our understanding of citizens' decision to become active members of the political community. Particularly, a focus on the interaction of individual psychological factors, like personality traits and motives, and contextual surroundings, like institutions, will offer valuable insights for mobilization. Public discourse about how to mobilize citizens and how to foster civic engagement often revolve around institutional reforms, like the establishment of citizen assemblies or direct democratic processes. Yet, whether such reforms can actually reinforce participation depends on the way citizens react to them. Only if we understand inter-individual differences in the reactions to contextual stimuli, can we reflect on their mobilizing potential. It is therefore essential to give psychological factors a firm place in explanatory models of political participation.

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Notes

- 1 The original label in the CVM is political information (Verba et al. 1995). This might be misleading since it could also refer to media use and the search for political information. Thus, political knowledge is used.
- 2 Supplementary material on the empirical analyses, including a description of data, measures, and methodology, and full regression results, can be found here: <https://osf.io/tdkvr/>.
- 3 Institutionalized participation includes contacting, working in a party or political organization, and campaign activities (dichotomized—participated in at least one of the activities in the last 12 months); non-institutionalized participation includes signing a petition, protest, boycott, and political online activities (dichotomized—participated in at least one of the activities in the last 12 months). Age (in years), gender (dichotomous), and education (in years) are included as additional control variables in the model.
- 4 The data applied in the analysis in this publication is based on the ESS Multilevel Data. The data is provided by Democracy Barometer (Engler et al. 2020), and prepared and made available by NSD—Norwegian Centre for Research Data. Neither

Democracy Barometer (Engler et al. 2020) nor NSD are responsible for the analyses/interpretation of the data presented here.

- 5 Political interest is measured as a dichotomous variable. The contextual variable is taken from the Democracy Barometer and is measured in 2014 as a continuous index (Engler et al. 2020).