

Psychology, Society and Modelling

February 2017

No. 1

an occasional supplement to the monthly Commentary:

<https://sites.google.com/site/gordonburmathsocsci/home/a-new-agenda>

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1 Psychology and the Conflict Research Society

A few of us have been having exchanging emails. We are thinking of having a meeting on peace psychology in London one Saturday sometime after Easter. If you are interested in being involved please drop me an email: gordonjburt@gmail.com.

Conflict Research Society:

<http://conflictresearchsociety.org/>

2.1 Trump, Brexit, politics and psychology – some preliminary work and discussions

2.1.1 Politics: a critique of majoritarian voting – Peter Emerson

Not for the first time it was Martin Wright that got us going:

Martin Wright

“Commentators are saying that Theresa May shouldn’t reveal her negotiating position because that would give an advantage to the EU negotiators. Isn’t this a case where mediation could help? Adam Curle described how he would ask one side in confidence what they might concede, then put that to the other side as a hypothetical. Then he reversed the process. Thus each side would know where concessions were possible, without either of them admitting in advance that they were lowering the bar.

Could someone tell Mrs May about this?

Don’t know if it would work with Trump! By all accounts he favours the win/lose style of dealmaking, provided he wins.”

Peter Emerson

“Once your fall-back position has been revealed, you have already fallen back to it.” I quote. But this applies to majoritarian, win-or-lose style negotiations.

With non-majoritarian preference voting, ah ha.....”

Peter’s phrase ‘majoritarian win-or-lose’ situations refers to a long-standing research focus of his. As Director of the de Borda Institute he has investigated, developed and advocated alternatives to majoritarian voting. The rest of this document concentrates on psychology; and it neglects the point made by Peter which rests more naturally in the field of political science. First though, here is Peter again:

“May I suggest there is at least one thing missing from the paper, and it concerns the question of democratic rights. Alas, because of the (western) world’s obsession with majoritarianism — majority rule by majority vote — we have the situation in which a single person, like Trump, can ‘win’ an election, even if by the slimmest of (negative) margins, and then inherit (nearly) all the power. It’s the same system that we (the West) gave to Mugabe, that we recommended to Rwanda, that we advocated for Yanukovich in Ukraine, and so on... and only when it all went horribly wrong did we then advocate that which was only an opposite, all-party power-sharing.

But, as I’ve said before, these are the consequences of our collective belief in the 2,500-year-old binary vote, the most divisive and inaccurate measure of collective opinion ever invented, a democratic decision-making procedure which in many instances is open to horrible manipulation by those who set the question. No wonder it was used by Napoleon, Lenin, Hitler *et al*, but also by more democratic leaders. It is indeed true to say that the (simple or weighted) majority vote is a “blunt” instrument, to use Professor Vernon Bogdanor’s description of referendums.

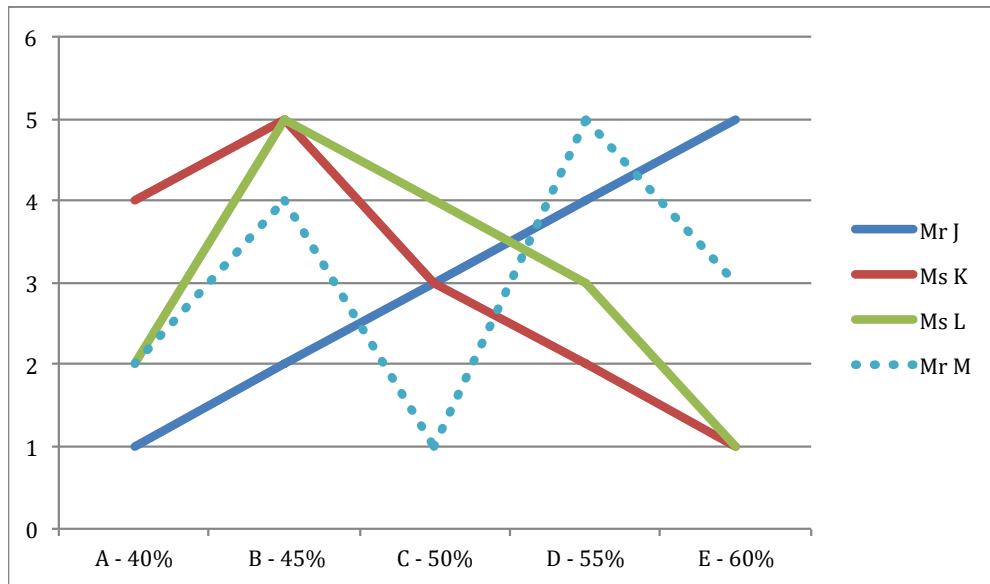
In other words, to suggest that the outcome of last June’s referendum was ‘leave’ is, to use the current jargon, a fake fact, etc. As pointed out in this press release, logically, we cannot say that the ‘leave’ outcome was “the will of the people.”

Sadly, of course, binary voting is ubiquitous - in law, in business, in civic society, etc. There may be some justification for its use in law, where an accused may indeed be guilty or not guilty, but there is little or no justification in politics for reducing (and distorting) multi-option debates on questions economic and agricultural, for example, into two-option questions.

“So here comes the argument. Binary voting is inaccurate. Preference voting is more accurate with the use of the Modified Borda Count (MBC).

Furthermore, if the options can be ordered such that folks’ preferences are single-peaked, then, as doubtless Gordon will tell you, the collective will will be the preference of the median voter, the ‘Condorcet winner’. Therefore the collective will, *vox populi*, the will of the people, CAN be identified. The median gives a middle position which might imply a compromise between two extreme options.

Have a look, if you will, at the power-point slide, voting on five tax rates for high earners (a debate in Westminster from a couple of years back): Mr M has two-peaked preferences, ... but the other three have individual single peaks, and for them there is a collective single peak.



[Because of Mr M we cannot apply Gordon's median voter theorem in this particular situation. However we can always calculate the MBC. (Often but not always the MBC winner will also be the Condorcet winner.) The slide is interesting. B defeats A, C and E but draws two-all with D. D defeats A and E but draws two-all with C. The three options C, A and E draw two-all with one another. There is no Condorcet winner; and also there is no way to order the options along one dimension to obtain single-peaked preferences for everybody. It would be possible to have single-peaked preferences in higher dimensions – but then the median voter result may no longer apply]

The science is pretty exact. So, if the MBC is more accurate, and therefore more democratic, than (simple or weighted) majority votes, the former should be the democratic norm. In which case, there would be no further justification for majoritarianism, for single party majority rule or for coalition majority rule. The US, the UK, Germany etc, we have all got it wrong. Instead, all-party power-sharing — à la Swiss, if you like — could be *de rigueur*.

This suggests that, if they are in sufficient strength in parliament, the likes of UKIP should also be allowed in government. Better the camel, as they say. And difficult though it might be to work with the Republicans, it is surely better to do that when they are still only a minority than employ a system whereby, but for a few checks and balances, Trump gets all the power. (Better still, of course, would be a multi-party system, not under PR-list which can in effect promote sectarianism, but under the Quota Borda System, QBS.)

Furthermore, the likes of Trump inside the tent could well tire of this consensus nonsense, as they would doubtless describe it, and, (to take the metaphor a little further), piss off.

As I've implied on many occasions, so much depends on the voting methodologies. And any paper on Trump and Brexit, I would suggest, should include at least a paragraph or two thereon.

Best regards,
Peter

PS The above press release was, needless to say, ignored. I've had two high level contacts with the BBC recently, both agreed enthusiastically with what I'm saying, and yet the BBC (and others) continue to avoid any discussions on majoritarianism. Is there any chance that the CRS might also campaign on this topic? We do feel that we are very much a lone voice, crying as it were in the wilderness, with not even a camel for company.

'The will of the people' – or the will o' the wisp

Majority voting is the most inaccurate measure of collective opinion ever invented.

Today's debate on Europe concerns three options: the UK in the

A WTO,
B Customs Union, or
C EEA.

Therefore last year's referendum debate (should have) consisted of four options: **A, B, C** and

D EU.

Sadly, the question was, in effect, “**D, yes or no?**” So, as predicted in my press release of 5.2.16, **A, B** and **C** supporters voted ‘no’ – or rather, ‘leave’.

The result was: 48% want **D**,
 x% want **C**,
 y% want **B**,
 z% want **A**,
 and $x + y + z = 52\%$.

If instead of “**D, yes or no?**” the question had been “**A, yes or no?**” or “**B, yes or no?**” or “**C, yes or no?**” doubtless a majority would again have said ‘no’. Binary ballots are inappropriate in multi-option debates. They often produce fake facts. They do not, and *cannot*, identify the will of the people. Logically, mathematically, it is impossible...

Lots of people, however, are “captivated by the mystique of the majority” – to quote the late Professor Sir Michael Dummett. So now comes the next dichotomy, a vote in parliament where {if it weren't for the whip} **D** with (**A + B**), or (**A + C**), or (**B + C**) could vote ‘no’ to Theresa May's chosen variation of **C**, or **B**, or **A**, respectively. When there's no majority for any one thing, there might be a majority against everything. Binary voting is a recipe for confusion if not conflict. And as noted by Pliny the Younger 1,912 years ago, it cannot cope with pluralism.

Meanwhile, others too are obsessed with majoritarianism – majority rule by majority vote – not least the US Congress. With Trump and co., however, majoritarianism is not only unfair, it is also downright dangerous. So reform is imperative, lest the forces of populism say ‘no’ to everything, in France, the Netherlands, etc. etc., until we are left with nothing.

But most politicians do not even consider preferential decision-making, and nor do the Electoral Commission, the Ombudsman, much of academia, and many in media like the BBC.”

[Steve Potter has recently commented:

“I like Peter's powerful argument against binary voting and this echoes the polarisation between good and evil, top dog, bottom dog that is a main mechanism of narcissistically disturbed personalities, cultures and organisations.” Steve has also commented:

“I work clinically with the duality that we as individuals are simultaneously one and many which is to say we live by an apparently unified sense of self whilst also living in the spaces of multiple identities.”

This prompts me to suggest that the unified self might be modelled by a set of voting multiple identities and so the preference model of voting might be applicable also to a single individual.]

Gordon Burt

“Thanks, Martin ... and Peter. I don't think I'm the best person to ask on this.

However, brushing my teeth and after watching the news, it occurred to me that Trump could turn out to be even worse than we thought. Perhaps we need a Trump study group.”

And so to bed.

Society: a hierarchy of voting systems

Steve Potter has recently commented:

“I like Peter's powerful argument against binary voting and this echoes the polarisation between good and evil, top dog, bottom dog that is a main mechanism of narcissistically disturbed personalities, cultures and organisations ...

... I work clinically with the duality that we as individuals are simultaneously one and many which is to say we live by an apparently unified sense of self whilst also living in the spaces of multiple identities.”

Steve's comments prompt me to think of society as a hierarchy of systems: cultures, organisations, personalities, identities (within a single person / ‘unified self’). Each system is simultaneously unitary and multiple. The relationship between the unitary and the multiple being governed by some voting system. For example a person may have the roles of self, wife, mother of A, mother of B and mother of C. There may be

six options for the family holiday. Her expressed individual preference will be the result of her five internal roles voting on the basis of her individual internal voting system.

2.1.2 Psychology ...

Martin Wright

“Yes, and the study group should include a psychologist. An American interviewee had an interesting adjective for him: ‘needy’ (in addition to the familiar ‘narcissistic’, ‘ignorant’ etc).

A chilling cartoon in *New Internationalist* magazine (Jan/Feb 2017): a Hitler rally in Germany in 1933 – one spectator says to the other ‘Sure he’s a little extreme, but once we elect him into power he’s bound to calm down.’”

We soon learned that Steven Potter had drafted a paper:

Here is an interesting paper which looks at the Trump like and Brexit ideas as narcissistic. Steve Potter, the author, would be pleased to have some feedback as he is thinking of working the material up into a workshop. Most psychologists are looking at Trump in addition to the narcissism as emotionally unstable and impulsive i.e., he does not think before he speaks/ acts.

I think a lot of it is a wish to overwhelm political ideas and politicians with government by commerce.

Best wishes, Julie

Brexit means Brexit: the narcissism in the idea

Steve Potter

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDoyZWE3N2FiNmIzMTk0MTg0>

Introduction

“As psychotherapists we focus on the individual stories of our clients’ lives. We tend to leave the politics that shape their lives to events beyond the consulting room. Ethically we are reluctant to apply mental health diagnostics to public figures such as politicians. However, there are times when a psychological formulation captures the political mood. At the time of writing, in the Autumn of 2016 that mood centres on narcissism (Smith 2016).

This article turns the focus away from the narcissism in the personality of politicians and looks at the narcissism invested in the ideas which they promote and we support. A focus on narcissism in the ideas is a more relational, less confronting and less shaming approach. It sees narcissism as a three-way structure linking individuals, ideas and society. Ideas are more or less narcissistic in their interaction with us depending upon how much we can negotiate and be in dialogue with them. Hopefully in politics and in therapy it can show the role of narcissism in shaping us and our group identities and ideologies.

The article is not intentionally siding with one political view or another but questioning how political ideas are used. For example, it is an open question whether changes in the UK’s trading, borders and governing relationships with Europe are harmful or helpful but there is something about the idea that Brexit means Brexit that inhibits dialogue. The paper begins with a map (figure 1) that tracks the creation and impact of narcissism in an idea and concludes with another map (figure 2) that tracks being in dialogue with ideas as the opposite of narcissism.

Throughout, narcissism is understood as a pattern of relating that operates within and between us individually, interpersonally and culturally. This relational approach is greatly helped by the concepts and methods of Cognitive Analytic Therapy (Ryle and Kerr 2003). Exploring the narcissism in ideas in politics may help us see similar patterns clinically, in organisations, in our social identities and culturally.”

Dennis Bury offered the following comment:

“Regarding the pathologising of the likes of Trump, I think I some of the things I have been saying at CRS about the need to obtain a comprehensive look pertains. The pathology approach in Nuremburg and the various recognition inter-rater experiments (Meyer et al) which followed over the years, even recently, may have blinded us to how normal actually some perpetrators of social dominance and social dominant acts are. One reason being that power corrupts and position changes the brain -so contexts are important too.

However, these are all for discussion time but I wanted to stake a claim as it were that the pathological model fitting is not the only kid on the block when studying these bad boys (girls less) and may, actually, get the dog a bad name through being too simplistic and divorced from social political realities.”

Gordon Burt also offered comment:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo2NzE1ZmlwMjlmYjBiYzIy>

“Before looking at your paper, I found myself thinking about Julie’s paragraph above. I am anti-Trump and anti-Brexit. So I am not a third party looking at a conflict from a detached position. I am partisan. I need to be careful this partisanship doesn’t lead me into error.

Trump is a person, Brexit supporters are a group of people, Brexit is a policy and Brexit ideas are a set of ideas. At certain points these distinctions may be important.

Trump supporters and Brexit supporters constitute about half the population. That’s substantial. So any claim I make needs to be able to stand up to that weight of opinion.

I shall be bringing my professional (academic) expertise to bear on the situation. But the claim by Trump and Brexit is that experts are defective.

What Trump/Brexit say sounds narcissistic. But Trump/Brexit accuse us of being in an expert/Westminster/Washington bubble – in other words it is us who have been narcissistic.”

Herb Blumberg commented:

“My own Dublin and forthcoming papers do not really relate to Trump. But plenty of worrying news and expert items do. To take just two examples (pointed out by Lucian Dixon, an old friend) (not that one is short of examples!):

<http://thenewsnigeria.com.ng/2017/01/johns-hopkins-psychotherapist-trump-dangerously-mentally-ill/>;

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/30/donald-trump-george-monbiot-misinformation>”

Later, Julie Lloyd took the discussion into a different area. She shared with us the following thoughts:

Trump and the psychopathy test

Julie Lloyd

“I have been discussing Trump with a forensic psychology friend (who is both an academic and clinician) and she suggests that this scale would be useful to measure Trump against in our attempt to understand him and his government from a psychological perspective.

A person who receives a score at or above 30 is considered a psychopath and will receive the psychopathy diagnosis. Julie - Trump scores the highest possible scoring on the PCL-R which is way above any forensic patient that I have ever tested!!!!

The highest possible score a person can get is 40.

The average neurotypical (normal) person receives a score between 3 and 6 (4 being the average estimate).

The average non-psychopathic criminal receives a score between 16 and 22.

The average criminal Sociopath and/or Antisocial Personality Disordered individual receives a score between 22 and 26.

The serious criminal Sociopath and/or Antisocial Personality Disordered individual receives a score between 26 and 29.

Criminal Psychopaths receive a score between 30 and 40.

A non-criminal Psychopath receives a score between 30 and 34.

Approximately 1 in 45 receives a score of 40.

Below here is the complete list with each of the 20 items:

THE PSYCHOPATHY CHECK LIST(Revised) or The PCL-R

Factor 1.

- 1 Glibness/superficial charm
- 2 Grandiose sense of self-worth
- 3 Need for stimulation/proneness to boredom
- 4 Pathological lying
- 5 Cunning/manipulative
- 6 Lack of remorse or guilt
- 7 Shallow affect [i.e. superficial experience and expression of emotions]
- 8 Callous/lack of empathy

Factor 2.

- 9 Parasitic lifestyle

- 10 Poor behavioural controls
- 11 Promiscuous sexual behaviour
- 12 Early behaviour problems
- 13 Lack of realistic long-term goals
- 14 Impulsivity
- 15 Irresponsibility
- 16 Failure to accept responsibility for own actions
- 17 Many short term marital relationships
- 18 Juvenile delinquency
- 19 Revocation of conditional release
- 20 Criminal versatility

The Check List has two different kinds of traits, with 10 of the items in each group. The groups have been given the terms: Factor 1. Traits, and Factor 2. Traits.

Factor 1. Traits

Factor 1 traits are sometimes called 'Classic Psychopathy Characteristics', or 'True Psychopathy Characteristics'. These are the traits that describe the Psychological, Mental or Emotional Characteristics. They pertain to how the person feels, his emotional make-up, his thought process and the general mindset resulting of these.

Factor 2. Traits

Factor 2 traits are sometimes referred to as 'False Psychopathy Characteristics'. These are the traits that describe an individual's Conduct, his Activities and Demeanor. They pertain to Antisocial Traits, Criminal and Aggressive Deviant Features in the Individual Lifestyle, Actions and Behavior.

There will be both Factor 1. and Factor 2. traits in a Psychopath. Generally speaking there will be a heavier leaning towards Factor 1. Traits - the 'True Psychopath' Traits, though there are those who have equally strong Factor 1. and Factor 2. Traits.

I wonder if we can get hold of a copy of the scale? (Don't have it where I work as I work with a different population). Could you have a look at work Herb to see if your department has a copy?"

Dennis Bury commented as follows:

"Clever stuff but where's the carefully worked Differential Diagnosis, Full Life History and if it's someone who wouldn't fill out one of these anyway an inter rater reliability with due attention to ratings occurring by chance. Use of pathology questionnaires like this, although highly persuasive I must say, without the help of social psychology can get the dog a bad name. I am inclined to wonder if the persistence of "Nuremburg Psychology" didn't actually blind us to the fact that social construction plays a large part in generating social dominants and cruel ones at that - in other words, despite the persuasiveness of pathology modelling, it's a wider scenario. Social dominants are made as well as born; i wonder if Brecht's dictum about dictatorship in Arturo Ui " the bitch is in heat again" (awful translation I'm told) isn't to be borne in mind as well."

Gordon Burt also commented:

"Thanks for this. You've prompted me to look at the Wikipedia entry:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychopathy_Checklist

Just very quickly, glanced down to the criticisms.

I'm uneasy ... not sure why ... perhaps I don't want to reach conclusions too quickly.

...

Second thoughts. It occurs to me that you and your friend are used to encountering psychopaths whereas I am not. Perhaps if I knew more about psychopaths and working with them, I would understand better."

Julie replied

"Dennis is right about the limitations of using such psychological measures. But we use stuff like this (although I am not familiar with that particular measure) all the time at work. Of course, using measures in clinical work doesn't make them right. Most of the measure we use at work have poor validation and even worse norming if at all. So why use any such dubious measures? The trouble is the alternative; not using them, is worse. I can form an opinion about someone's pathology, and indeed my clinical life is based on doing the rounds of a) quick assessment (often just an interview with maybe some paper measures but often not), b) formulation (my psychological theorising) and c) intervention. It is a messy far cry from the process Dennis described in which at least the formulation would be based on assessment that is reasonably robust. And I can slide into a belief system about my work that will not hold up in the test of time if it is based on constructs rather than behavioural observation. Behavioural observation is the most accurate because it does not employ super-ordinate constructs. I once read an account written in the 17th Century about a man whom I would recognise clearly to be autistic; what was so timeless about this account was it was based on close observation, not theoretical ideas which appear and vanish within a couple of decades. Do we have enough

examples of Trump's behaviour that latter generations would recognise as a particular psychological set of traits? I think we do.

But at least with using a measure, (so long the measure was developed by someone very different from me, of course), I am forced to think about different constructs than my own. So I just wonder, if we don't try to use any measures because their norming and validity is so weak that the width of standard error exceeds what might be found out, what do we do? Are we left with our own opinions? Is there a risk, regarding Trump as an example, that we would describe him in narcissistic terms, but not in psychopathic?

On the other hand, those two constructs are hugely open to debate and are both written in such insulting terms in DSM IV (Narcissism is omitted from DSM V which we joked about that was because the authors of DSM V were so narcissistic themselves they couldn't bear to think about it), that it is hard to separate diagnosis from sin.

Yet I work with narcissists and psychopaths in both my jobs; one an LD job and the other a Psychiatric Intensive Care job (these working constructs are not based on IQ). If I don't think about the ideas of narcissism or psychopathy, do I stand a bigger risk of unwittingly colluding with their pathology? If I do think about it, do I automatically insult and dislike them? Even a transdiagnostic approach like CAT, once we map, then most mental health professionals would recognise a personality disorder underlying what's on the map.

What ideas do you have for how to structure an exploration of Trump; his followers, people who oppose him and their audience?"

The following day on the radio:

Link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08dnr3g>

BBC Radio 4 The Life Scientific, Tuesday 14 February 2017, 9am

'Simon Wessely on unexplained medical syndromes'

Professor Sir Simon Wessely has spent his whole career arguing that mental and physical health are inseparable and that the Cinderella status of mental health funding is a national disgrace. His current role, as President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, has given him a platform to bang the drum for parity of funding, better training for doctors and the need to reduce stigma around mental health (and armchair psychiatrists who think it's OK to diagnose the new American President with a mental illness get short shrift as well).

Julie commented:

"Well, I think arm-chair psychologists / psychiatrists are a much maligned group, but they certainly won't go away as everyone has to be a bit of a psychologist to get by with other people. The wonderful situation is to be an armchair psychologist and find someone to pay for it ..."

Wessely's phrase 'armchair psychologists' might be seen as an example of what I call Type B negative comment. See Appendix 1.

The Rorschach test used on the Nazis tried at Nuremberg

'The blots were even used on the Nazis tried at Nuremberg ... according to the test, all the architects of the Final Solution came out as normal guys.'

Rumbelow, Helen. "It's a butterfly – or my parents fighting." *The Times, Saturday Review*, February 18, 2017: 14.

Searls, Damion. *The Inkblots. Hermann Rorschach, His Iconic Test and the Power of Seeing*. London: Simon and Schuster, 2017.

2.2 Peace, Brexit and the Big Five

Personality Dimensions and Attitudes Towards Peace and War

Herbert Blumberg (Goldsmiths, University of London):

Purpose. The present study examined the relationship between major personality dimensions and attitudes towards peace and war.

Design. Three samples--two consisting of British psychology students (N = 64 and 121) and one of Israeli students (N = 80), responded to measures of some or all of: Five-Factor inventory; SYMLOG trait form; General Survey (GS) including authoritarianism; Attitudes towards Peace and War; specific attitudes towards peace and war policy.

Findings. The general attitude measures were associated with the specific attitudes. Both were associated with authoritarianism but not consistently with other personality dimensions.

Limitations: descriptive findings might not generalize..

Research Implications: Authoritarianism should be measured in any studies of attitudes related to peace, war, conflict and structural violence.

Practical Implications: Practitioners of peace education may first need to address high authoritarianism and low integrative complexity. Also, countering structural violence related, for instance, to poverty or prejudice/discrimination may require a comprehensive approach including collaborative work with clinical psychologists applying both implicit and explicit assessment tools.

Originality/value: Documenting links (and lack of them) among personality variables and attitudes towards peace and war has practical and theoretical value—and may contribute to organizational schemes shaped by personality structure and bearing implications for negotiations. In terms of a paradigm by Morton Deutsch, our results show individual differences in, and associations among, variables relating to the remediable likelihood of parties being differentially likely to find themselves (a) in negatively vs. positively interdependent situations and (b) carrying out effective instead of "bungling" actions.

Paper:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo1MTU2ZjEwMjk4MjU1MjQ4>

Slides:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDoxNzNhOTI5NTdiODMxYzIx>

I offered some comments to Herb and he replied:

Gordon, Thank you for sharing this material. When I now look again at "my" data, it does seem that (despite what I said in my talk) Big5 Openness does correlate about as strongly with peace/war attitudes as does (General Survey) authoritarian conformity (F) - though F remains the main correlate with the couple of items we used re specific attitude items toward contemporary action/policy.

Also, in the Israeli data, it is (General Survey) Aggressive Mistrust that correlates significantly with peace/war attitude items, and the Big5 dimensions did not.

Best wishes, Herb

My comments had been based on an analysis of the correlation matrix of Herb's data. My current *idée fixe* is single-peaked correlation profiles. Figure 1 shows this for the two peace and the two war factors and the US pre-empt and UK air policy issues.

Figure 1 below shows how the six variables can be ordered along a continuum in such a way that each variable has a single-peaked correlation profile. Note that the two extreme points, Peace 2 and War 1, have the largest negative correlation between each other, -0.8.

Note that a discussion of the mathematics of single-peaked correlation profiles is contained in Chapter 13 of the 2015 Yearbook (in preparation).

Figure 1 single-peaked correlation profiles: peace, war, US pre-empt and UK air

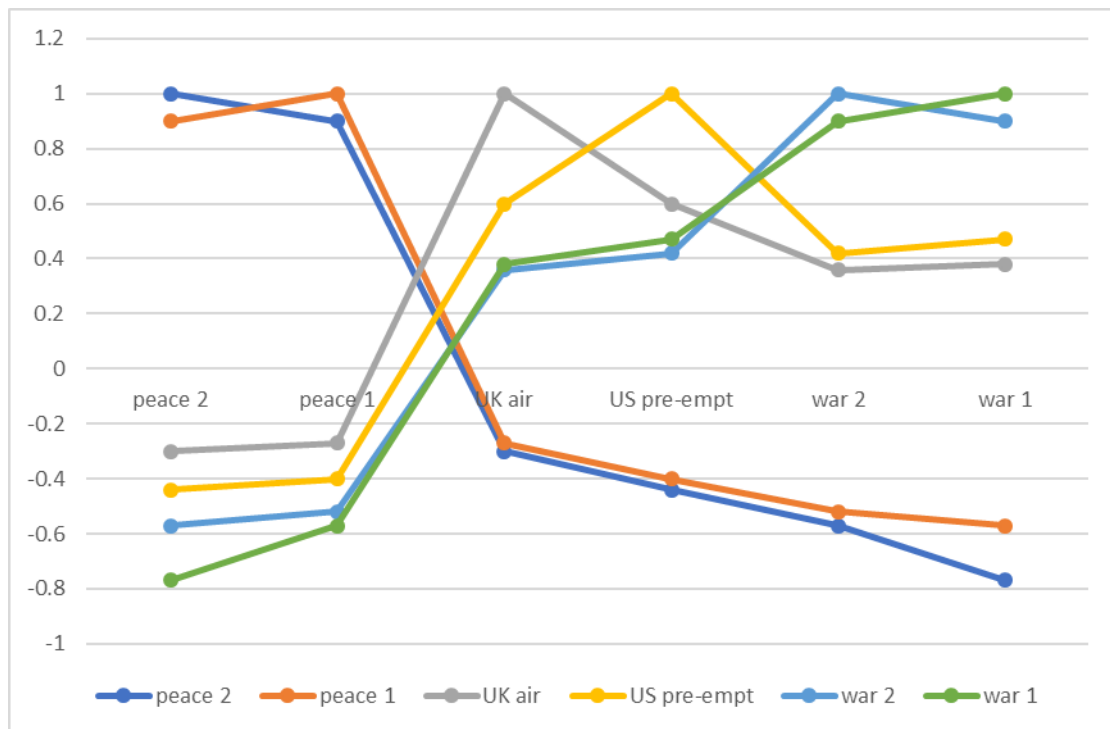
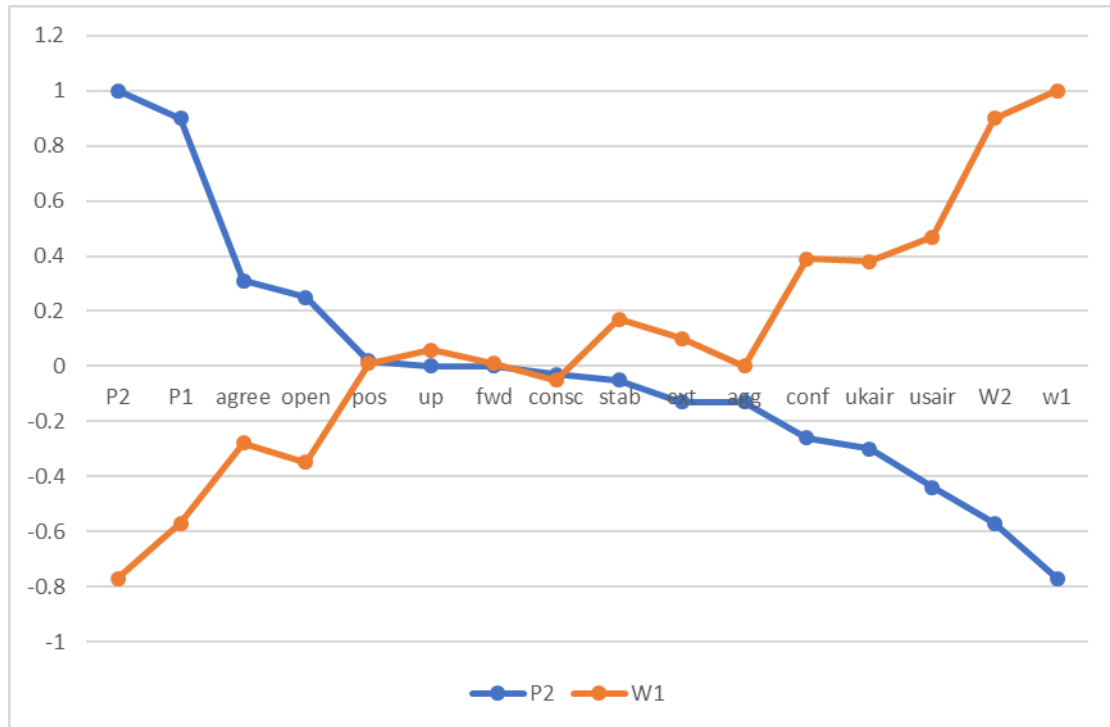


Figure 2 below adds in all the personality variables, again with Peace 2 and War 1 at the two extremes. The ordering aims to have the peace 2 correlations decreasing and the War 1 correlations increasing. There is a tendency for this to be the case but there are exceptions.

Figure 2 The correlation profiles with Peace 2 and War 1 for all the variables



We now look at the correlations in greater detail. First we consider the Big Five. The Big Five are ordered on a continuum: Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Stability, Extroversion and Openness. Their correlations with one another are single peaked on this continuum. Figure 3 gives partial support to this view. The correlations of the Big Five with other variables are single peaked or single troughed on this continuum. Figure 4 gives fairly strong support for this view in the case of Herb's data: the two war factors and the two bombing policy issues are single-peaked at stability and extroversion respectively; and the two peace factors are almost single-troughed at extroversion. Figure 5 shows the profile for the other personality variables. Up (dominant/assertive v. submissive)* is linked to extroversion; positive* is linked to agreeableness; and authoritarianism/ conformity** is linked to 'closedness' (the negative of openness) – and these three might be said to exhibit single-peakedness or single-troughedness. Agressiveness** has an M-shaped profile, combining (dis)agreeableness, (in)stability and extroversion. Forward* (task-oriented/conforming/predictable) also has an M-shaped profile, combining agreeableness, conscientiousness and extroversion.

*SYMLOG; **GS

Figure 3

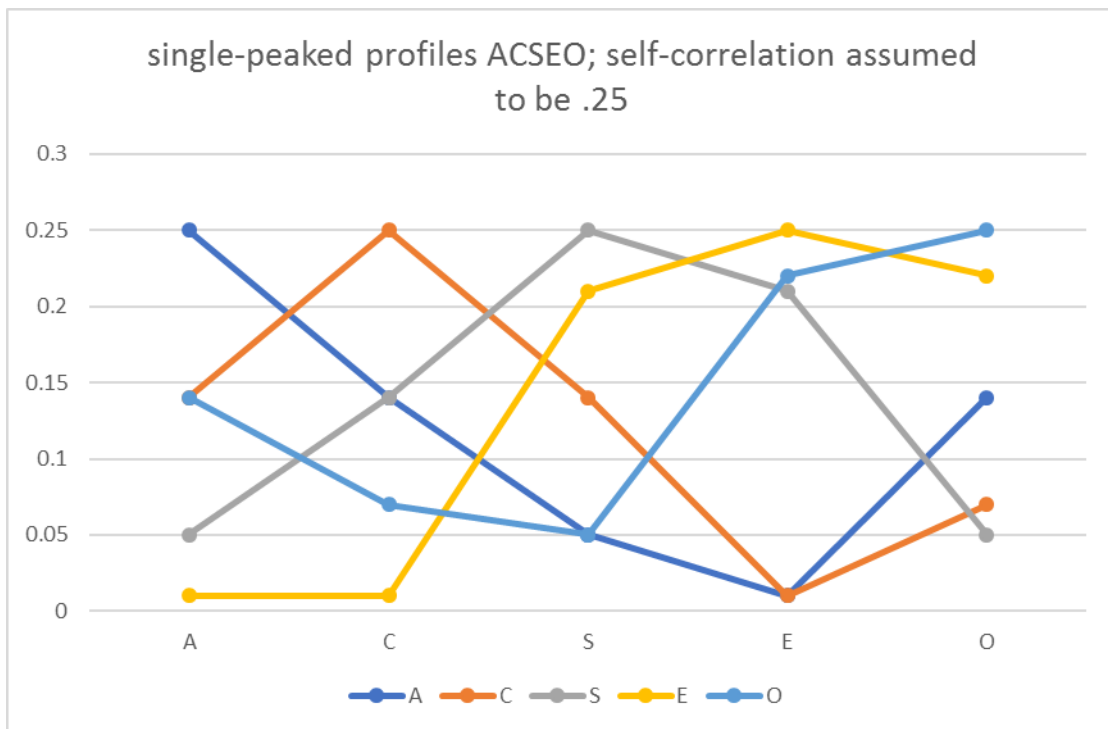


Figure 4

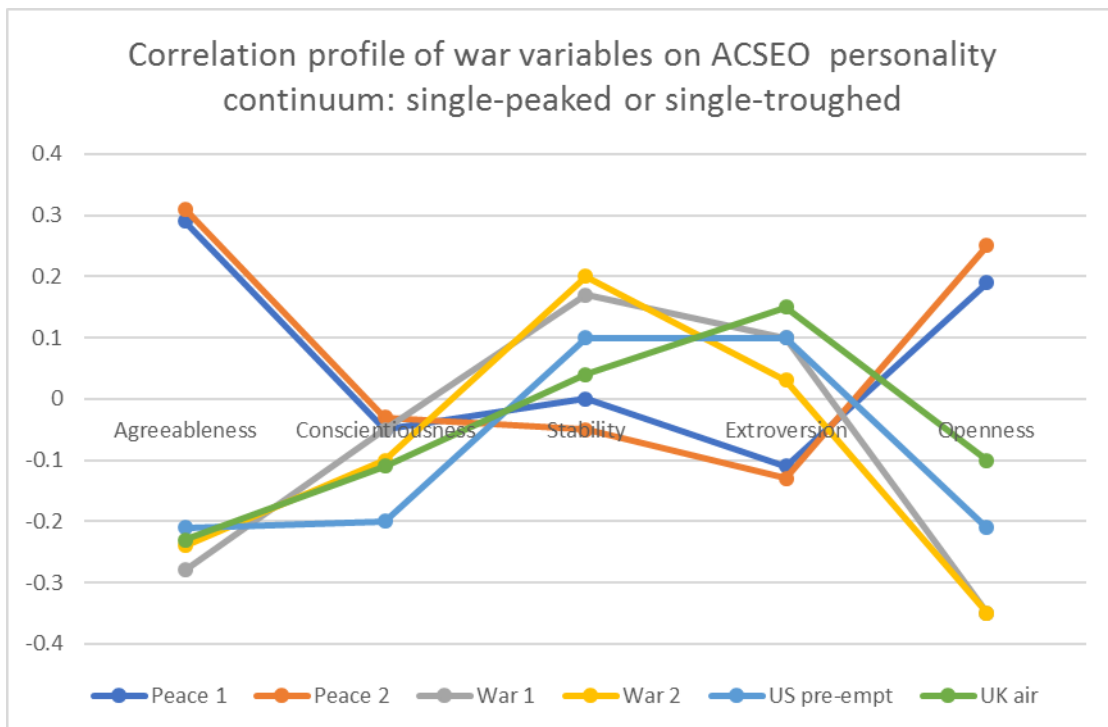
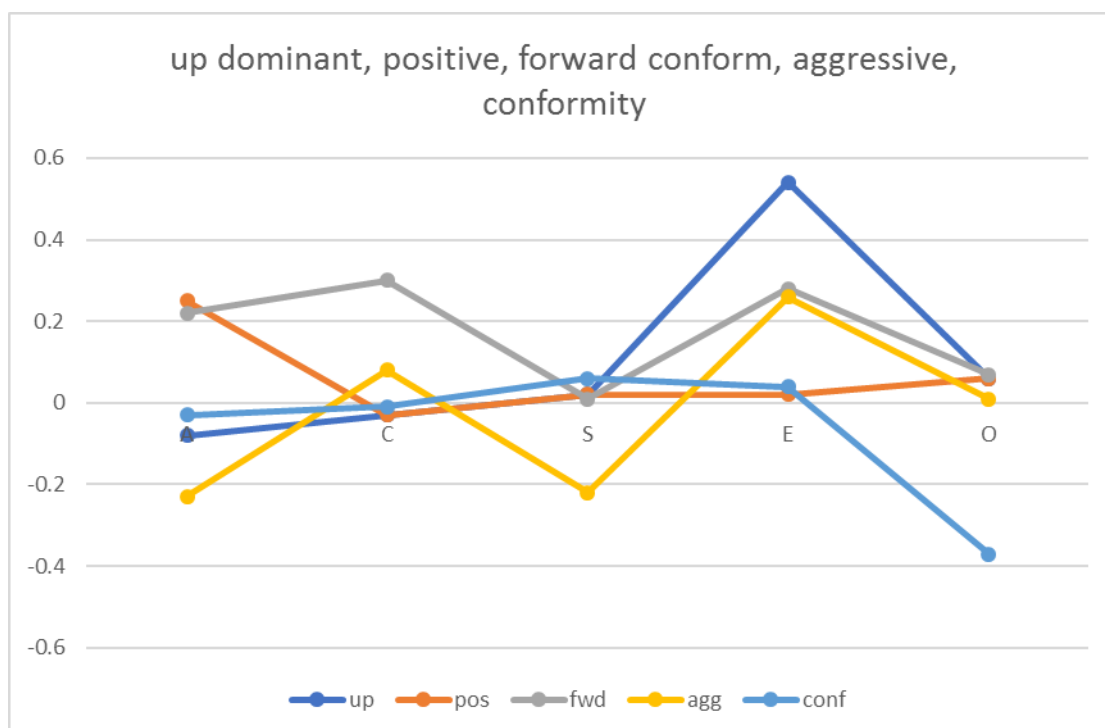


Figure 5



Brexit, geography and the Big Five

Section 7 in Commentary, June 2016, No. 30

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbxnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo0NzJhOGVkn2MxYzQyNw>

The voting areas used in the referendum are the same as the areas used in a recent study of geographical variation in personality. The Big Five form a continuum: from Agreeableness to Conscientiousness to Stability to Extraversion to Openness. The Leave vote has a single-peaked correlation profile on this continuum. Openness has a high correlation with the Remain vote ... and also with higher education, same-sex marriage, foreign-born, Liberal Democrat. London is particularly high on openness.

It so happens that the voting areas used in the referendum are the same as the areas used in a recent study of geographical variation in personality ...

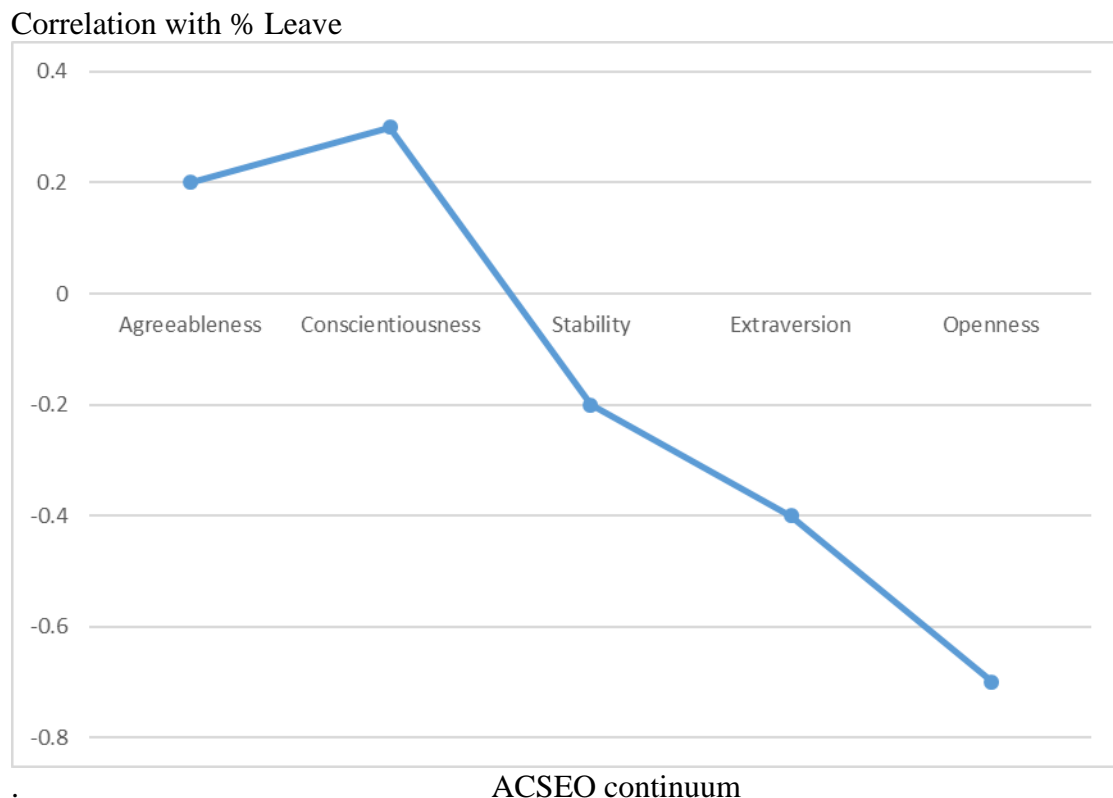
‘The second part of Chapter 8 of the 2015 Yearbook (Burt, in preparation) is on psychology and geography and a range of important social variables. How do regions within the UK differ? How do the different variables relate to one another? ‘Friendly Scots and grumpy Londoners’ was typical of the superficial newspaper headlines, belying the depth of the actual study of 380 Local Authority Districts in the UK by Rentfrow and his colleagues. The pattern of results was similar to findings from previous research which looked at national differences or regional differences in the USA: personality traits are unevenly distributed geographically and this is associated with a range of important political, economic, social, health and demographic outcomes. Personality was assessed using the Big Five Inventory. In this chapter an analysis of the correlations at the individual and group level locates the Big Five

along a continuum: from Agreeableness to Conscientiousness to Stability to Extraversion to Openness. The correlations for each of the Five had a single-peaked profile on the continuum. Likewise the correlations for each of twenty-four political, economic, social and health variables had a single-peaked or single-troughed profile on the continuum. This type of analysis of points in abstract space is further discussed in Chapter 14.'

Consistent with the preceding paragraph, the correlations for the Leave vote have a single-peaked profile on the personality continuum. Note that the correlations refer to differences between areas, not differences between individuals. See Figure 8. The Leave vote correlates +0.2 with Agreeableness, +0.3 with Conscientiousness, -0.2 with Stability, -0.4 with Extraversion and -0.7 with Openness. Thus Openness is the personality dimension most strongly related to the vote: Openness is associated with voting Remain.

The correlation between Leave and Openness of -0.7 is over all areas; this increases in magnitude to -0.8 for areas in England; and decreases to -0.6 for those areas in England which are not in London. In other words the inclusion of London boosts the magnitude of the relationship. Note that Rentfrow finds that openness is high in London.

Figure 6 Correlation with percentage Leave for the Big Five personality factors



Trump, Brexit, partner similarity and the Big Five

To many of those who lost, Brexit and Trump came as a shock. They had not ‘easily perceived’ the views of their fellow citizens – indeed they had not ‘easily perceived’ the views of their partners.

"It totally undid me that he could vote for Trump," said McCormick, 73, who had not thought of leaving the conservative Republican before but felt "betrayed" by his support for Trump.

"I felt like I had been fooling myself," she said. "It opened up areas between us I had not faced before. I realized how far I had gone in my life to accept things I would have never accepted when I was younger."

Three months after the most divisive election in modern U.S. politics fractured families and upended relationships, a number of Americans say the emotional wounds are as raw as ever and show few signs of healing.

The rancor has not dissipated as it has in the aftermath of other recent contentious U.S. elections. A Reuters/Ipsos opinion poll shows it has worsened, suggesting a widening of the gulf between Republicans and Democrats and a hardening of ideological positions that sociologists and political scientists say increases distrust in government and will make political compromise more difficult.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll of 6,426 people, taken from Dec. 27 to Jan. 18, shows the number of respondents who argued with family and friends over politics jumped 6 percentage points from a pre-election poll at the height of the campaign in October, up to 39 percent from 33 percent. (See graphic: [tmsnr.rs/2jLSU36](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-relationships-insight-idUSKBN15M13L))

Sixteen percent said they have stopped talking to a family member or friend because of the election - up marginally from 15 percent. That edged higher, to 22 percent, among those who voted for Democrat Hillary Clinton. Overall, 13 percent of respondents said they had ended a relationship with a family member or close friend over the election, compared to 12 percent in October."

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-relationships-insight-idUSKBN15M13L> ;

<http://fingfx.thomsonreuters.com/gfx/rngs/USA-TRUMP/010031N23SL/USA-TRUMP-RELATIONSHIPS.jpg> ;

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2017/02/09/woman-ends-22-year-marriage-over-husbands-support-trump/97686178/> ;

"For partners who voted different ways in the referendum, the difficulty of reconciling opposing political views may be the final straw, said [Nigel Shepherd, the chair of Resolution](#), which represents solicitors and those involved in family law across England and Wales."

Bowcott, Owen. "Brexit may be final straw for some couples, say divorce lawyers." *The Guardian*, November 8, 2016.

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/nov/08/brexit-final-straw-for-some-couples-family-lawyers-divorce-hotel>

Marsh, Sarah and Guardian readers. "It's not EU ... it's Brexit: the couples in turmoil after the referendum result." *The Guardian*, February 7, 2017.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/feb/07/eu-brexit-couples-turmoil-referendum-relationship>

[Brexit and Trump divorces]

These reactions are related to the point made by Wu YouYou et al. that "friends and spouses tend to be similar in a broad range of characteristics, such as age, educational level, race, religion, attitudes, and general intelligence". However the Brexit and Trump reactions suggest an additional subjective and dynamic element: the current value of a relationship depends on current subjective perceptions of similarity. As the current subjective perception of similarity changes so does the current value.

Some dimensions are easier to perceive than others. So couples are more likely to be similar on more easily perceived dimensions. The dimensions listed above may be more easily perceived than are personality dimensions and that may explain why couples are less likely to be similar in terms of personality. The effect may also explain why similarity is greatest for online-language-behaviour personality, less for online-like-behaviour personality and least for self-report personality. (Wu YouYou et al.)

David Stillwell very kindly responded making the following important points:

We didn't measure perceptions of similarity - our measures were based on personality differences based on either FB behaviour or self-report. However, you bring up an important point which is why couples are similar. It could be that couples just become more similar over time, or that they choose a partner similar to themselves, or that they choose a partner fairly randomly and then break up with them if they're not similar enough. In the latter case, it might be perceived similarity which is key. Unfortunately I don't have access to longitudinal dating data right now, so we can't do that research.

Birds of a Feather Do Flock Together

Behavior-Based Personality-Assessment Method Reveals Personality Similarity Among Couples and Friends

[Wu Youyou](#), [H. Andrew Schwartz](#), [David Stillwell](#), [Michal Kosinski](#)

Psychological Science, January 6, 2017

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0956797616678187>

Friends and spouses tend to be similar in a broad range of characteristics, such as age, educational level, race, religion, attitudes, and general intelligence. Surprisingly, little evidence has been found for similarity in personality—one of the most fundamental psychological constructs. We argue that the lack of evidence for personality similarity stems from the tendency of individuals to make personality judgments relative to a salient comparison group, rather than in absolute terms (i.e., the *reference-group effect*), when responding to the self-report and peer-report questionnaires commonly used in personality research. We employed two behavior-based personality measures to circumvent the reference-group effect. The results based on large samples provide evidence for personality similarity between romantic partners ($n = 1,101$; $r_s = .20-.47$) and between friends ($n = 46,483$; $r_s = .12-.31$). We discuss the practical and methodological implications of the findings.

Couples, Friends Show Similarity in Personality Traits After All

<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/couples-friends-show-similarity-in-personality-traits-after-all.html#.WKXCCTvyiUk>

Woodcock, Nicola. "Do opposites attract? Only in the movies." The Times, February 16, 2017: 9.

3 Psychology ... Values, World Society and Modelling

The Yearbooks and Commentary contain some psychology.

Yearbook 2014:

Happiness, emotion, personality

Care and therapy

Yearbook 2015:

Rentfrow's geographical psychology

The ACSEO continuum (agreeableness, conscientiousness, stability, extraversion, openness) – the Big Five

Yearbook 2016:

Correlation of district's personality (openness) and district's Brexit vote

Burt, Gordon. (2016) *Values, World Society and Modelling Yearbook, 2014*. Cambridge Scholars.

<http://www.cambridgescholars.com/values-world-society-and-modelling-yearbook-2014>

Values, World Society and Modelling Yearbook, 2015 (due February/March 2017)

An overview of the chapters is available at (pages 3 to 16):

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo3ZTFiNzMDZjIjNTU4YWUz> .

Values, World Society and Modelling Yearbook, 2016

first draft of Overview with online links to Commentary:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo3ZDk2ZjNjMDI2MzNhNTFl>

4 Psychology and society journals

Psychology and Society

<http://www.psychologyandsociety.org/>

A related issue of *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*

<http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/special/6042101.aspx>

Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology

The inaugural online edition, February 2017.

<http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/pac/23/1/>

Bibliographer and Book Review Editor

Herbert Blumberg

Goldsmiths College, University of London, United Kingdom

5 *Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion* – Paul Bloom

I have just read Paul Bloom's article in today's Observer. The article is well summarised by the title of the book. I have two problems with the title. The first is that because of my admittedly sloppy way of thinking I don't have a clear idea in my head about the distinction between empathy and compassion. Let us assume there is a conceptual distinction – I wonder if there is a psychological distinction: what is the correlation between empathy and compassion across people and situations? I hypothesise that it is quite high. My second problem is the role of the word 'rational' in the title. The word is applied to 'compassion' but not to 'empathy'. So how would Paul Bloom place the following in order of preference?

rational compassion
irrational compassion
rational empathy
irrational empathy

Bloom's article provides examples of what might be called irrational empathy. So perhaps the book might have been better titled

Against Irrationality and for Empathy/Compassion/Morality.

I suppose I'll have to read the book and find out!

- 1 Other people's shoes
- 2 The anatomy of empathy
- 3 Doing good
- Interlude The politics of empathy
- 4 Intimacy
- Interlude Empathy as the foundation of morality
- 5 Violence and cruelty
- 6 Age of reason

New York Post Best Book of 2016

“We often think of our capacity to experience the suffering of others as the ultimate source of goodness. Many of our wisest policy-makers, activists, scientists, and philosophers agree that the only problem with empathy is that we don’t have enough of it.

Nothing could be farther from the truth, argues Yale researcher Paul Bloom. In *AGAINST EMPATHY*, Bloom reveals empathy to be one of the leading motivators of inequality and immorality in society. Far from helping us to improve the lives of others, empathy is a capricious and irrational emotion that appeals to our narrow prejudices. It muddles our judgment and, ironically, often leads to cruelty. We are at our best when we are smart enough not to rely on it, but to draw instead upon a more distanced compassion.

Basing his argument on groundbreaking scientific findings, Bloom makes the case that some of the worst decisions made by individuals and nations—who to give money to, when to go to war, how to respond to climate change, and who to imprison—are too often motivated by honest, yet misplaced, emotions. With precision and wit, he demonstrates how empathy distorts our judgment in every aspect of our lives, from philanthropy and charity to the justice system; from medical care and education to parenting and marriage. Without empathy, Bloom insists, our decisions would be clearer, fairer, and—yes—ultimately more moral.

Brilliantly argued, urgent and humane, **AGAINST EMPATHY** shows us that, when it comes to both major policy decisions and the choices we make in our everyday lives, limiting our impulse toward empathy is often the most compassionate choice we can make.”

Bloom, Paul. *Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion*. New York: Ecco: 2016.

Bloom, Paul. “Think empathy makes the world a better place? Think again ... This renowned psychologist’s new book is overturning received wisdom Here, he explains the flaws in feeling other’s pain.” *The Observer*, February 19, 2017: 36.

Review Jennifer Senior in *New York Times*:

https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/06/books/review-against-empathy-paul-bloom.html?_r=0

Appendix 1: Positive and negative, type A and type B: ‘misguided in the belief that’ ... ‘morons’

“The debate surrounding the Labour leadership has contained both positive and negative comment. The negative comment has been of two sorts, type A and type B. Some have felt that there has been too much negative comment or at any rate too much type B negative comment. Type A negative comment is exemplified in the letter (see earlier section) in which Daniel Adamson of Queens’ College, Cambridge states that ‘political commentators are misguided in the belief that Jeremy Corbyn’s possible victory in the Labour leadership contest will further cement the Conservative party’s grip on UK Politics’. Type B negative comment is exemplified in the following three quotations, using the words ‘morons’, ‘virus’ and ‘stupid’.”

Appendix 2: Trump, Xi Jinping and Burton ... peace and conflict; values and world society

My email of January 20, 2017

Dear colleagues,

Would you like to contribute a piece for the next (February) issue of *Commentary*?

Trump, Xi Jinping and Burton ... peace and conflict; values and world society

Today: Donald Trump's inaugural speech:

https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/20/us/politics/donald-trump-inauguration-speech-transcript.html?_r=0

Tuesday: Xi Jinping's speech at Davos:

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/01/full-text-of-xi-jinping-keynote-at-the-world-economic-forum/>

Meanwhile I have been editing Kevin Clements' *John Burton Memorial Lecture, 2015* for the 2015 Yearbook:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo0YzU0ZTFIMTk2NTY4Mzhj>

How do Trump, Xi Jinping and Burton relate to ...

... the psychology of individuals?

... tensions within US and Chinese society? ... tensions in the UK, in Europe and elsewhere?

... US and Chinese politics? ... domestic politics in the UK, in Europe and elsewhere?

... the US and Chinese economy? ... the world economy?

... military tensions throughout the world?

... cultures and ideologies within US and Chinese society? ... in the UK, in Europe and elsewhere?

... experts, the public and us – our understanding of the world?

See also:

Yearbook, 2016

Values, World Society and Modelling Yearbook, 2016

first draft of Overview with online links to *Commentary*:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo3ZDk2ZjNjMDI2MzNhNTFl>

9 USA presidential elections: geography and political space:

Commentary 31, 14-24:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo2NTRiNzdiYWQzNjQxZWlW>

Commentary 35:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo2NzA5NDRkNGUxYjUzNTIj>

Your piece can address the above agenda - or can be about any other topic.

Please send me your contribution by Sunday 8th February.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burt