

Personality, Ideology and EU Support

Personality's effect on EU support

mediated by ideology among students in the Netherlands

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Abstract

Including the study of personality into the study of attitudes towards the EU can contribute to a better, more detailed and nuanced understanding as personality offers the possibility to account for differences between individuals. These differences are important as they can result in variance in political thought and action. In a quantitative study ($N = 186$) conducted in the Netherlands this research investigates the direct effect of personality on EU support as well as the indirect effect of personality, mediated by ideology on EU support. Therefore, this study measures personality, EU support and ideological self-placement and conducts a mediation analysis. The results show a significant direct relationship between the personality trait agreeableness and EU support but no significant indirect effects and emphasize the importance of incorporating psychology into the study of public opinion in the EU.

Keywords: EU support, public opinion, ideology, personality, mediation analysis

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Ideology, Personality and EU Support in the Netherlands

Over the last decades a noticeable shift in public opinion has occurred throughout the European Union (EU). Opposition towards the EU has manifested itself at European and national levels across the entire Union (Usherwood & Startin, 2013). Throughout the last decades the EU has faced several crises of political, economic and social nature, such as the Eurozone crisis and the Refugee crisis. In light of these crises, the EU has encountered economic instabilities, and serious questions concerning border protection and legitimacy rose (De Vries, 2018), which altogether contributed to a climate of uncertainty among the population. This opened the door for the emergence of eurosceptic movements and undermined the support for the EU (De Vries, 2018; Usherwood & Startin, 2013, pp. 1-2). This rise in euroscepticism is especially present in public opinion (Usherwood & Startin, 2013, p. 7). Previously, for a substantive amount of time public opinion has been seen as rather irrelevant in order to gain an understanding of European integration (De Vries, 2018, p. 4). However, in light of the advances in European integration and shifts in public opinion, it seems more important than ever to investigate public opinion to attain a comprehensive picture on attitudes towards the EU (Nielsen, 2016).

The importance of public opinion in EU support and scepticism

While, there are a multitude of reasons to explain this decline in EU support and rise of euroscepticism, many attempts to explain this phenomenon focus on the economic and sociopolitical factors. De Vries (2018) however argues, that age, gender and education are more decisive than the economic status or financial anxiety when separating EU supporters from eurosceptics. She shows that eurosceptics often place themselves in a higher social group, are less likely to be unemployed and have relatively fewer financial worries (De Vries, 2018, p. 104). It has been shown “that the differences based on sociodemographic background, issue priorities, and behavior in elections and referendums between types of supporters and sceptics have widened during the Eurozone crisis” (De Vries, 2018, pp. 207-208). These large differences in attitude towards the EU in public opinion will make it even more difficult to find policies that everyone can consent to and that the public will be satisfied with (De Vries, 2018, p. 208).

Personality and public opinion

Usher & Startin (2013) advocate that a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach is necessary in order to understand euroscepticism. Despite all the previous studies,

that have intensively investigated attitudes towards the EU (Nielsen, 2016, p. 1176) up to date, there is still no full understanding of why attitudes towards the EU differ (Bakker & De Vreese, 2016). This urges the scientific community to use new techniques, in order to advance the research. Including psychological variables can be a valid method. Political psychology researches “how political, economic and social forces interact with psychological dynamics” (Nesbitt-Larking et al., 2014, p. 3). Recently the field of political psychology has become increasingly popular. Nevertheless, in the field of EU studies specifically, political psychology has not been implemented thoroughly. Therefore, expanding the current research methods of public opinion with elements of the study of psychology could add value to the study of political behavior and public opinion, and overall contribute to our understanding of attitudes towards the EU. Hereby, the concept of personality could be especially fruitful (Mondak, 2010). Firstly, because the general relationship between personality and political views has not been investigated sufficiently and is often neglected (Mondak, 2010). Secondly, because all political structures and actions are influenced by people’s personalities (Winter, 2003b, p. 110, as cited in Mondak, 2010, p. 11) and thirdly, because personality can explain many actions in political life (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018).

Curtis and Nielsen (2018) showed that personality matters for political attitudes and behavior. In a cross-national study, they tested personal predisposition’s direct and indirect effect on public support for the EU. Hereby, Curtis and Nielsen (2018) were able to “confirm that ideology is an important mechanism in transferring personality’s effects” (p. 1251).

Obstacles to the systematic study of personality and politics

Up until now it has not been very common to incorporate personality variables and models to study mass behavior in political domains (Mondak, 2010). A reason why the systematic study of personality and politics has not gained more interest earlier on is that it is subjected to a variety of methodological obstacles and that it was seen as very impractical to not only pick certain parts of a personality but have to incorporate personality as a whole into a model. In addition, “full-scale theories of personality” were lacking (Mondak, 2010, p. 12). As noted by Sniderman (1975, as cited in Mondak 2010, p. 12) researchers have merely used concepts from different sources and disciplines that suit them best. This made it difficult to replicate studies and build upon previous studies (Mondak, 2010, p. 13). Mondak (2010, p. 18) emphasizes that researchers interested in the field need to communicate better in order to advance the study of personality and politics. This is the case because it involves relatively large batteries of questions, that can lead to respondents’ fatigue, thus making it more difficult to collect sufficient data. Additionally, many scholars of politics lack the psychological know-

how (Mondak, 2010). Nowadays however, substantial advancement has been made in the field of personality studies, consequently shorter and yet reliable personality measures are available and more researchers work interdisciplinary. Therefore, personality should and can be included into the study of political behavior and public opinion. This is why, despite the existing methodological obstacles, it is important to conduct studies in this field.

Different kinds of influences

Influences and their effects can vary in nature, a distinction can be made between direct and indirect effects. By this means effects can be seen interchangeably with influences. A direct effect therefore means that personality *directly* influences EU attitudes. This can be referred to as a direct causal relationship. An indirect effect however means that personality influences something else, the mediator (e.g., ideology) which then in turn influences EU attitudes. Thus, personality *indirectly* influences EU support. Hereby, one talks about mediation or a mediated relationship or an indirect causal relationship. Most of the literature investigating the relationship between personality and EU attitudes, is focused on the direct effects of personality on EU attitudes. Therefore, personality's direct influences on political attitudes have been studied extensively (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018). In contrast, only a few scholars turned to the indirect effects of personality on EU support. Based on the limited research on the indirect influence of personality on EU attitudes, it is argued that the indirect effects might be more important than the direct effects (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018). However, extensive research is necessary to make more generalizations. Nevertheless, this indicates that one should not negate the potential of indirect effects (Mondak & Halpern, 2008; Schoen & Schumann 2007; Wolak & Marcus, 2007). "Labbe-St-Vincent (2011) have formulated the mediation hypothesis, which claims that the effect of personality is mostly indirect: it is mediated by classical attitudinal predictors of participation" (Gallego & Oberski, 2012, p. 426). This emphasizes the need for mediation analysis in order not to isolate mechanisms and look at alternative pathways (Imai et al., 2011; Keele, 2015). Mediation analysis is a statistical method which investigates the causal sequence between variables.

Since there is no full understanding yet on why EU attitudes differ among the population (Bakker & De Vreese, 2016, p. 26) and the literature stresses the importance of studying the indirect effects of personality as antecedents of political attitudes (Gerber et al., 2010; Mondak & Halperin, 2008), I will investigate the relationship between these variables in this quantitative study.

Research question

The aim of this research is to contribute to the study of personality, political behavior and public opinion. It adds to a more extensive understanding of public views towards the EU by using new approaches, specifically including psychology into the field of EU studies. It aims at investigating the direct effect of personality as well as the indirect effect of personality on EU support mediated by ideology. More specifically, this study will look at “Ideology as a mediator of personality’s effects” (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1251) on EU support. Thus, the research question will be: Does ideology function “as a mediator of personality’s effects on EU support” (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1251) in the Netherlands? In order to answer this research question, I will test whether personality has a significant direct effect on EU support (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018) (hypothesis 1) and if “personality has a significant indirect effect” on EU support “mediated by ideology” (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1255) (hypothesis 2). In the following chapters these hypotheses and the methodology underlying this study will be elaborated. The methods and results chapter will give more information on the testing procedure. Hereby, it will build upon the work of Curtis and Nielsen (2018) who investigated the indirect effects of personality on EU attitudes in five countries. In order to advance research, it is important to prove the validity and reliability of existing studies, which is done by repeating previously conducted studies and compare the results to results obtained by different researchers. My study will not be an exact replication of the study of Curtis and Nielsen (2018) but will differ in the methodology. Nevertheless, the following study is heavily inspired by the work of Curtis and Nielsen (2018) and uses it as a starting point and methodological guideline. This research will contribute to our knowledge as it looks for indirect effects of personality on EU support, which could have significant implications for the study of EU support. More specifically it shows whether the previous results by Curtis and Nielsen (2018) can also be replicated among a sample in the Netherlands.

Literature Review

This chapter will set out the relevance of personality in the study of EU support. Therefore, trait theory and the Big Five personality model will be introduced. Then, this chapter will link the Big Five personality model to ideology and present the relationship between ideology and EU attitudes. Lastly, this chapter discusses the direct and indirect effect of personality on EU support.

Towards a combined approach

This piece of work advocates for a multidisciplinary perspective on EU support, and more prominence of psychology in the study of European integration and public opinion in the EU. Only when one fully understands what influences and predicts EU support, policies can be made that enhance EU support and satisfy the people. Following this reasoning it is very important to study EU support and understand its psychological implications (Mondak, 2010).

What is often overseen in the study of politics and public opinion is that humans are not blank slates, but already differ considerably before confronting the political world (Mondak, 2010). The study of personality offers the possibility to account for these differences. Since it is clear that these differences exist it is necessary to include them into the study (Mondak, 2010, p. 19). As Mondak (2010) argues, humans differ in such a fundamental way that it surely must have an impact on political behavior, and not taking these differences into account means that the study of political behavior will remain incomplete (Mondak, 2010, pp. 19-20). However, it is important to understand that personality should not be understood as opposed to already existing explanations, rather it should be added to get an even more detailed understanding. This will lead to more accurate findings (Mondak, 2010). Including psychology will give us the opportunity to explain differences more accurately, it can for example help us to investigate the differences between individuals whose life situations and contacts with the political environment are very alike (Mondak, 2010). Further, it will give us the opportunity to acknowledge the temporal order of the factors that influence political behavior (Mondak, 2010, p. 20).

So, this is especially interesting because there has not been much research on the combination of the study of the EU and political psychology (Manners, 2018). Including psychology and hence a quantitative approach based on empirical data will, logically, increase the number of empirical studies conducted and therefore decrease the dependence on Eurobarometer results, which Manners (2018) criticizes. He argues that “Eurobarometer data

tends to suggest that national identities and opinions are fairly homogenous and fixed for any one member state” and are therefore problematic (Manners, 2018, p. 265). Additionally, psychology will help us to understand the satisfaction as well as the dissatisfaction “many Europeans feel towards politics, politicians, government and the EU in the twenty-first century” (Manners, 2018, p. 271).

Personality and trait theory

In order to apply psychological concepts such as personality to the study of politics, it is of utmost importance to have a thorough understanding and clear definition of these concepts. However, there is no consensus in the literature on one specific definition of personality, several definitions have been derived by a multitude of researchers and it is advised to choose a definition that best fits the cause of the research (Mondak, 2010). For the purpose of this study, I chose to use the same definition of personality that Mondak (2010) has used. Personality as conceptualized in this study “refers to a multifaceted and enduring internal, or psychological, structure” (Mondak, 2010, p. 6). It is further assumed that personality is substantially rooted in biology, and that personality influences behavior. In other words, personality refers to the traits or characteristic of an individual that are stable, transsituational and consistent over time (Mondak, 2010). In this research, the focus will lay on personality traits, which can be seen as the “basic unit of personality” (Mondak, 2010, p. 7). Traits “represent basic categories and individual differences in functioning” (Mondak, 2010, p. 7), nonetheless researchers agree that personality consists of more than “just the sum of traits” (Mondak, 2010, p. 8). While specific definitions of traits vary in the literature, there is general consensus that a trait is a mental structure, that is fixed and enduring, predicts behaviors and is susceptible to observation (Mondak, 2010), that “traits represent basic categories of individual differences in functioning” and that “traits are useful as the basic units of personality” (Pervin, 2003, p. 38, as cited in Mondak, 2010, pp. 6-7).

The idea that traits constitute a personality is very important for the study of “politically significant attitudes and behaviors” (Mondak, 2010, p. 6). It gives the researcher the opportunity to not only look at personality as a whole but also enables them to determine more specifically, what personality trait can lead to which behaviors or attitudes. So, personality traits enable us to study political behavior and attitudes in greater detail. The first efforts to develop a valid, reliable and significant trait model took place in the 1930s and 40s (Mondak, 2010). The aim of such trait theory is to “specify manageable sets of distinct personality dimensions that can be used to summarize the fundamental psychological differences among individuals” (Gray & Bjorklund, 2014, p. 575). As with personality there

is not one precise definition of a trait, however there is an agreement concerning the “nature and significance of traits” (Mondak, 2010, pp. 6-7).

The Big Five personality model

After extensive trait research and a variety of attempts to build different trait models, it became clear that different researches, using different methods still found the same five factors underlying personality, which were named the Big Five (Schoen, 2007). From these, the five-factor model emerged, which “proved valid across space and time and compatible with (and superior to) alternative trait systems” (Schoen, 2007, pp. 410-411). The Big Five (B5) personality model builds on the assumption that personality consists of different traits (Mondak, 2010). The traits included in the B5 model are openness (to experience), conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. Each of the traits has six underlying facets, which correlate with each other (Gray & Bjorklund, 2014). People who score high on openness are characterized as sensitive, open-minded, curious, and imaginative. People who score low tend to be insensitive, cautious and conservative (Roccas et al., 2002, p. 792; Schoen, 2007, p. 412). Conscientiousness is closely linked to impulse control. Therefore, people scoring high on conscientiousness tend to be ambitious, responsible, careful and organized. People who score low on conscientiousness are often lazy, impatient, careless, irresponsible and disorganized (Roccas et al., 2002, p. 793; Schoen, 2007, p. 412). People scoring high on extraversion tend to be talkative, assertive, sociable and energetic, whereas people scoring low on extraversion are more reserved, cautious and shy (Roccas et al., 2002, p. 792; Schoen, 2007, p. 412). People who score high on agreeableness tend to be compliant, modest, cooperative, altruistic and trusting. People not scoring high on this dimension tend to be suspicious, demanding and irritable (Roccas et al., 2002, p. 792; Schoen, 2007, p. 412). The dimension of neuroticism deals with negative emotions. People scoring high on neuroticism tend to be anxious, insecure, angry and discontent, while people scoring low on neuroticism might not experience these negative emotions and tend to be calm and emotionally stable (Roccas et al., 2002, p. 793; Schoen, 2007, p. 412). According to Mondak (2010, p. 25), the B5 constitute an efficient and feasible way to incorporate the study of personality into the research on political behavior since the B5 traits have the potential to influence and individuals’ goals and values (Gerber et al., 2010; Mondak, 2010). Mondak’s (2010) key theoretical claims are that “personality is largely rooted in biology, that traits are central elements of personality and that traits are stable and endure psychological differences, and that important psychological differences can be represented via a five-factor depiction of

trait structure” (p.12). While the B5 model has been included in multiple research fields, in the study of politics its implementation remains rare (Mondak, 2010, p. 18).

However, the effects of the B5 on political behavior are of utmost relevance, as it has been previously shown that the “effects of the Big Five traits on EU attitudes are independent of commonly identified antecedents of EU attitudes such as government evaluation, economic outlook, national identity and anti-immigrant attitudes” (Bakker & De Vreese, 2016, p. 26). Consequently, understanding the specific effects the B5 have on attitudes towards the EU would enable politicians, policy makers and the media to more efficiently target the citizen, “inform the public and increase the legitimacy of the EU” (Bakker & De Vreese, 2016, p. 27).

Link between the Big Five and ideology

Gerber et al. (2010) showed that the B5 are a more important predictor of ideology than education or income. Ideology for the purpose of this study focuses on left or liberal political ideology versus right or conservative political ideology. When talking about ideology, in the American context a distinction is often made between liberal and conservative, while in the European political context one rather talks about a left and right paradigm. Generally, the same ideological underpinnings are used for these classifications, which is why they are functional equivalents (Fuchs & Klingemann, 1990). Previous research has shown that personality affects ideological orientation (Mondak, 2010; Curtis, 2016; Bakker, 2017). Research that studied the effect of the B5 on political ideology indicates that “openness to experience predicts a liberal ideology and conscientiousness predicts a conservative ideology” (Funk et al., 2013, p. 807). A study on the relationship between personality traits and political behavior has revealed that there is a relationship between openness and support for democratic nominee John Kerry in the 2004 U.S. presidential election (Caprara et al., 2009, p. 83). For the purpose of this study, this indicates that people scoring high on openness are more likely to identify themselves with the left and people who score high on conscientiousness are more likely to identify themselves on the right side of the political spectrum. Research which looked at specific personality traits found that conscientiousness is “positively related to conservatism” (Curtis, 2016, p. 463). This implies that it is positively associated with a right ideological standpoint and negatively related to having a liberal viewpoint, thus left oriented ideology (Caprara et al., 2006; Cooper et al., 2013). Further research found that agreeableness relates to right oriented ideology (Carney et al., 2008). In contrast, Caprara et al. (2009) showed that agreeableness is associated with “liberal ideologies in several European countries” (p. 84). In contrast, Gerber et al. (2010) found that agreeableness is insignificant for ideology in general but that it is connected to

more liberal economic and conservative social views. This demonstrates that the findings are not yet fully conclusive and in part contradictory, which might be attributable to different samples and research methods.

Duckitt and Sibley (2016) investigated how the B5 personality traits predict political behavior (thus support for EU) and self-rated political orientation, such as identifying oneself as left oriented or right oriented (L-R orientation). Further, they investigated how sociopolitical values and ideological attitudes mediate the effect of the B5 on political behavior/orientation (EU support). Hereby, their study revealed that “openness, associated with voting left, has been the strongest and most consistent predictor, while conscientiousness, associated with voting right, and agreeableness, associated with voting left, have also been consistent predictors” (Duckitt & Sibley, 2016, p. 110). Thus, openness, conscientiousness and agreeableness are consistent predictors of L-R political behavior, orientation and ideological attitudes. Extraversion and neuroticism do not display such strong effects. According to Duckitt and Sibley (2016), prior studies that investigated B5 as predictors of political orientation, and thus people’s L-R self-identification, have produced similar findings. Moreover, they found that these ideological attitudes were able to mediate the effects of B5 on L-R voting behavior and political orientation to a large to full extent (Duckitt & Sibles, 2016). Mondak and Halperin (2008) argue that personality can be seen as a predecessor of political orientation and thus ideology because one’s personality is formed at a very young age (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, pp.1253-1254). Additionally, personality and ideology are both considered to be highly stable traits (Bloeser et al., 2015). Gerber et al. (2010) surprisingly showed that the B5 are more important predictors of ideology than education or income.

Ideology as a predictor of EU attitudes

According to Flood and Soborski (2018), ideology is a factor in the formation of negative beliefs, opinions and attitudes concerning the EU. Previous studies have shown that ideology can be seen as a predictor of EU attitudes. Therefore, strong ideological attitudes, left as well as right, lead to public euroscepticism (Aspinwall, 2002; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005, as cited in Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1254). However, the reasons for support or scepticism vary across the ideological spectrum. At the beginning of the European integration project the majority was in support of the project, however there has been a decline in that support and a rise in euroscepticism. Hereby, the Treaty of Maastricht marks a turning point (De Vries, 2018). With the Maastricht treaty more power has been transferred to the supranational institutions and this shift in power and sovereignty from the national to the

supranational level has been noticed by the citizens and impacted their attitudes and behaviors. The introduction of the single currency made the deep political and economic interdependence in Europe even more visible (De Vries, 2018, p. 34). The political and economic interdependence, which was strongly noticed by the general public from the Eurozone crisis onwards made euroscepticism not only an attitude of ideological extremists but of the general public. The reasons for support or scepticism of the EU vary across the ideological spectrum.

Left-wing eurosceptics are critics of the liberal and market-oriented EU as they see it in contrast to a good national social welfare system. Therefore, left-wing eurosceptics are often from countries with better national welfare systems (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005; Garry & Tilley, 2015; Hobolt & De Vries, 2016, as cited in Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1254). The EU was initially predominantly a market integration project, this resulted in left-wing scepticism, as the left perceived market liberalization as a threat to national welfare systems. National welfare is at the heart of left ideology, therefore the evaluation of the EU for left-oriented people will be influenced by that. Another concern for the left is the promotion of international solidarity (Van Elsas & Van der Brug, 2014).

The right however, is more concerned with other topics in relation to the EU. Right-wing euroscepticism is usually attributed to strong national feelings and connected to the fear to lose the country's identity and sovereignty due to integration (Aspinwall, 2002; Hooghe & Marks, 2008; McLaren, 2002, as cited in Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1254). The European integration process has led to a shift from the national to the supranational level whereby a loss of sovereignty on the national level has happened, and the right-wing eurosceptics are very concerned with that. This explanation on how left or right ideology relates to euroscepticism can explain the contradictory findings on the relationship between L-R ideology and euroscepticism. Van Elsas and Van der Brug (2014) argue that the contradictions stem from the nature of European integration, because the European integration process has brought along changes in the categories, that are used to "determine how Left - Right ideology is linked to euroscepticism" (Van Elsas & Van der Brug, 2014, p. 195).

Benchmark theory of EU public opinion (De Vries, 2014) argues that support or scepticism is dependent on one's evaluation of perceived benefits of one's country's membership and the perceived benefits of not being an EU member. If the benefits of membership outweigh the disadvantages one would be a supporter, and in the opposite case would be a sceptic (De Vries, 2018, p. 55). Hereby, evaluation also depends heavily on the national context. Additionally, there are subcategories to account for the differences between

supporters and sceptics. Benchmark theory argues that EU attitudes are multilevel and multidimensional in nature (De Vries, 2018, p. 206). Therefore, it is not sufficient to conceptualize public opinion in a one dimensional manner, as there are varying degrees and elements of the EU to support or oppose (De Vries, 2018, p. 206). Investigating the relationship between ideology and EU support in more detail will go beyond the scope of this paper, as the research design of this paper does not differentiate in such a detailed manner. The focus of this research lays on the effects of personality on EU support.

Direct and indirect effects of personality on EU support

A variety of studies have further shown that “personality determines individuals’ attitude formation and political behavior” (Nielsen, 2016, p. 1176). Nielsen (2016) focused on the direct effect of personality on EU attitudes. He looked at “how personality influences attitudes towards EU integration and how personal predispositions moderate framing effects, impacting EU attitude formation.” (Nielsen, 2016, p. 1175). There is consensus in the literature that personality has an effect on numerous EU orientations in several ways. Literature on EU support reveals “that individual personality traits affect public opinion” (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1253) and that there is a link between personality and ideology (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018). According to Curtis (2016), the indirect impact personality has on our political behavior, for example on our voting behavior, is bigger than estimated. This is in line with previous findings by Schoen and Schumann (2007) and Wolak and Marcus (2007) who estimated that the indirect effects of personality are greater than the direct effects of personality on political outcomes (as cited in Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1252). As we can see, some work has been done investigating the relationship between personality and political behavior. However, up to date only Curtis and Nielsen (2018) focused on the indirect effect of personality on EU support and its mediation by ideology. Curtis and Nielsen (2018) found that personality has a direct and indirect influence on political attitudes and behavior. In a study conducted in five countries, at least one of the B5 traits affected EU support directly. Further, their study showed that ideology significantly mediates the effects of several traits. According to Curtis and Nielsen (2018) the literature on the indirect effect is to some extent contradictory. For example, they report that Curtis (2016) researched in the UK and found an indirect effect of ideology and two other mediators on personality but that Bakker and De Vreese (2016) were not able to find indirect effects in their study. Their study was conducted in the Netherlands and looked at how different traits affect several EU attitudes. Nevertheless, Bakker and De Vreese (2016) showed that the B5 personality traits can be seen as antecedents of attitudes towards the EU. They found that some of the B5 personality traits are associated

with EU attitudes but that “identification with the EU is unrelated to personality traits” (Bakker & De Vreese, 2016, p. 37). More specifically, they show that high levels of openness, agreeableness, neuroticism and low levels of extraversion are associated with widening of the EU. Further, they found that neuroticism and conscientiousness have a positive association with deepening of the EU and that trust in EU institutions is positively associated with conscientiousness (Bakker & De Vreese, 2016, p. 37). These differences in findings concerning the indirect effects, can be attributed to the usage of different research methods, research purposes, the usage of different outcome variables and the fact that not that much research has been done on this (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018). That is why further investigating the indirect effect of personality on EU support is very relevant. Therefore, I will focus on the indirect influence of personality on EU support mediated by ideology.

As becomes clear from this review there is substantive literature on the independent causal effects of personality on ideology and ideology on EU attitudes, whereas the mediational link between them is still not fully understood and extensively investigated (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1254). Based on this, it is relevant to investigate whether personality, ideology and EU support significantly connect to each other in my altered replication of the study (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1254) in the Netherlands. In order for ideology to have an effect on EU support, and thereby mediate the influence of personality, the individual must be aware of where she or he stands on the L-R spectrum and have the capacity to include this information when forming an opinion on the EU (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1255).

Based on the literature, I expect to be able to replicate the results from Curtis and Nielsen (2018) in the Netherlands. Thus, my goal is to show that the B5 traits have a significant direct effect on EU support (hypothesis 1) and that personality also has a significant indirect effect mediated by ideology in the Netherlands (hypothesis 2).

Methods

Research design and procedure

In order to answer my research question and to study “ideology as a mediator of personality’s effects” (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1251) on EU support, I will test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): “Personality has a significant direct effect” on EU support (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1255).

Hypothesis 2 (H2): “Personality has a significant indirect effect” on EU support “mediated by ideology” (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1255).

I conducted an online survey among young people in the Netherlands (aged 18-30), striving for a sample size of 200. The sample size remains relatively small compared to other research, so conclusions drawn from this study should not be generalized. Curtis and Nielsen (2018) took sample sizes over 900 respondents for example. My study will not be an exact replication of the study of Curtis and Nielsen (2018) as it deviates in methods and demographics. I have to make these changes as conducting an exact replication is not feasible for this study. This study will more specifically examine how “ideological self-placement mediates the effect of the Big Five personality traits” (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1251) on EU support. Therefore, I assessed L-R ideology via a self-placement questionnaire, implementing another research method would not be feasible for this thesis as it is not cost and time efficient and would go beyond what is reasonable for this research. The respondents were asked to place themselves on a scale from *far left* (0) to *far right* (10) (see Appendix A). Curtis and Nielsen (2018) used the same method to capture L-R ideology, which supports the validity and reliability of my research design so far. Further, a EU support index was generated, through asking the respondents 17 items and generating a standardized version of these (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018). My EU support index is based on the 4-item EU support index from Curtis and Nielsen (2018), namely support for EU unification, support for EU membership, trust in EU institutions and support for the Euro (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p.1256). However, the EU support index was extended by adding an item on solidarity towards the EU and 3 items on support for European key policies. Further, the items used by Curtis and Nielsen (2018) have been broken down and extended. For example, it is not only asked for general trust in EU institutions but it is also broken down into specific EU

institutions (see Appendix A for a detailed list of the questions and additional information). Respondents answer to these questions on a scale from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). This extended EU support index, provides the opportunity to get a more nuanced picture of what constitutes EU support. By having several subcategories of EU support, it will be possible to see which aspects of the EU are more supported by the survey participants and which aspects are lacking support. More specifically, solidarity was added because in the recent developments, concerning aid in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, big debates have sparked in the Netherlands, as the Dutch government was portrayed as lacking solidarity by the media. This media attention and debates about solidarity made it especially topical and interesting to look at solidarity specifically. Items on support for European key policies were added, because for lay people it is easier to form an opinion on specific policies rather than just on somewhat abstract institutions. Simultaneously, by asking for specific policies, it is also easier to perceive for the respondent what the EU actually does, in case the respondent is not fully informed. The institutions were split up, in order to see whether there is a significant difference between the institutions. Only three institutions were included, because a lay person might not be sufficiently aware of the other institutions to form an opinion that would add to the quality of this study.

Additionally, the respondents also had to undergo a measure of B5 personality traits. Therefore, the Mini-IPIP measure (Donnellan et al., 2006) was used. It consists of only 20 items, but has extensive reliability and validity. This makes the questionnaire shorter and overall, less time consuming. Therefore, it decreases the bias of respondent's fatigue. This questionnaire tests the five personality traits with four items respectively. Examples are 'I have a vivid imagination' (openness) or 'I don't talk a lot' (extraversion). Respondents rate themselves on a scale from *very inaccurate* (1) to *very accurate* (5) (see Appendix A).

I gathered questionnaire data from my respondents through the online self-administration questionnaire tool Qualtrics (<https://www.qualtrics.com>) (see Appendix B), I exported the data to SPSS and statistically analyzed the data, hereby I used PROCESS to conduct the mediation analysis.

Causal mechanisms and mediation analysis

Understanding causal interference is one of the goals of social science research (Imai et al., 2010). In order to identify these causal mechanisms, it is necessary to specify the intermediate variable (ideology in this study) which lies between the dependent variable (personality trait) and outcome variable (EU support) (Imai et al., 2011). This often poses difficulties, as researchers were often only able to show how a dependent variable affects an

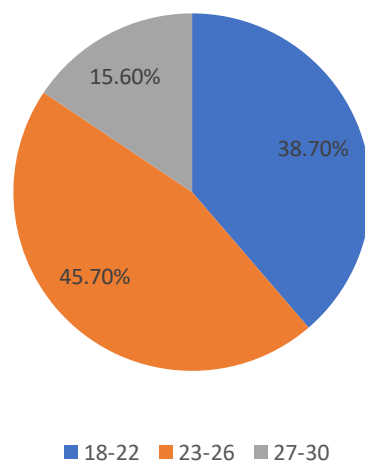
outcome. However, this research method cannot explain the reasons of the effect. This limitation is very important as the identification of causal mechanisms is necessary to investigate competing theoretical investigations. Nevertheless, causal mediation analysis might be able to overcome these limitations, by helping to identify intermediate variables (mediators), which lie in the causal pathway between the dependent variable and the outcome (Imai et al., 2010). Hereby, it is necessary to define the causal mechanism as a process, whereby one variable T (personality trait) causally effects another variable Y (EU support) through a mediator M (ideology) (Imai et al., 2011) instead of looking at the direct effect of T (personality) $\rightarrow Y$ (EU support). I focus my investigation on the indirect effect, through the mediator (M), thus T (personality) $\rightarrow M$ (ideology) $\rightarrow Y$ (EU support) (Imai et al., 2011).

Participants and data collection

My sample consists of 186 respondents, 57.5% were female ($N = 107$) and 41.9% identified as male ($N = 78$). The participants were between 18 and 30 years old ($M = 4.77$, $SD = .702$, $Mdn = 5$). The age distribution can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Percentage of respondents per age



65.1% of my sample are Dutch, 30.1% have another EU nationality and 4.8% are not nationals of an EU country. All participants live in the Netherlands because this study is focused on the Netherlands. While testing people from different countries would be highly interesting, it has already been covered to some extent by the study of Curtis and Nielsen

(2018) and it would be too extensive for the purpose of this paper. 78.5% of my sample are students out of which 54.3% study at Leiden University and 24.2% study at another Dutch Educational Institution. 21.5% of my sample are not students. 17.7% report that they are full-time employed, 6.5% report that they are unemployed, 7% report that they are part-time employed and 1.1% report to be self-employed. Regarding education, 33.3% of my sample report that a high school diploma is their highest degree, 33.3% report that a Bachelor Degree is their highest degree and 20.4% report that they obtained a Master degree. Initially, 261 people filled in the online questionnaire, which was conducted in October 2020. 75 needed to be excluded due to missing values or inappropriate responses.

Looking at the demographics of this study it is evident that my sample is not representative of the general Dutch population. In the Netherlands, 49.2% are female in the age group between 18-30 years (CBS Statline, 2020). In my sample however 57.5% were female. Further, only 11.9% of the 18-30-year-old population in the Netherlands are not Dutch nationals (CBS Statline, 2020), whereas in the group of university students it is 20% (VSNU, 2020). In my sample however 34.9% have a non-Dutch nationality. Further, in the 2019/2020 academic year 303299 people were enrolled for either a Bachelor or a Master study in the Netherlands (VSNU, 2020). This number represents 10.5% of the 18-30-year-old people living in the Netherlands. However, in my sample 78.5% reported being a student.

Therefore, my sample is also not representative of the Dutch population aged 18-30 because it has a higher number of non-Dutch nationals, university students and females than the actual Dutch population.

A reason why my sample is not representative of the population in the Netherlands is because the snowball sample technique was used. The questionnaire was sent to everyone that fell into the target group (Living in the NL and between 18-30 years old) and these people were asked to fill in the questionnaire and send it to another 5 people who fall into the target group. Due to feasibility concerns, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and no budget for this thesis, it was decided that this is the best way to get respondents. Additionally, I tried to recruit people online, through different social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn) and with QR code flyers at the Leiden University Library, however due to the Covid-19 pandemic in person recruitment was not very successful. This sample should not be used to make generalizations about the entire Dutch population between 18-30 years or any other groups that differ in demographics from the sample group. In order to create a representative sample, there should be a better balance between male and female respondents, the number of students should either be higher (close to 100%) to have a student population

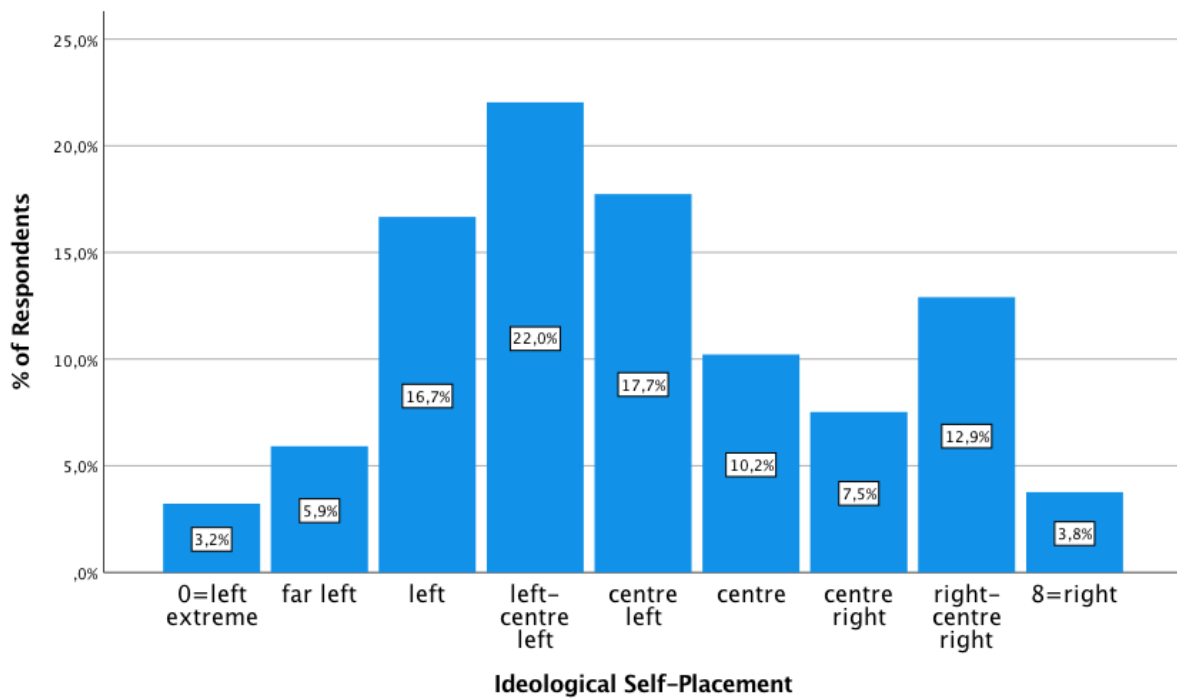
sample or significantly lower to generate a sample of the entire population aged 18-30. Further, the number of non-Dutch nationals would need to be lower (11.9% for entire population or 20% for student population sample). Further, a greater sample size is needed and using a ‘survey distribution platform’ instead of the snowball technique to be able to reach out to a more diverse sample is advised.

Results

Ideology

Figure 2

Distribution of ideology across the political spectrum



Note. This figure shows the distribution of ideological self-placement across the political spectrum in percentages. ‘Far right’ and ‘right extreme’ are not represented in the bar chart because no respondent falls into these categories.

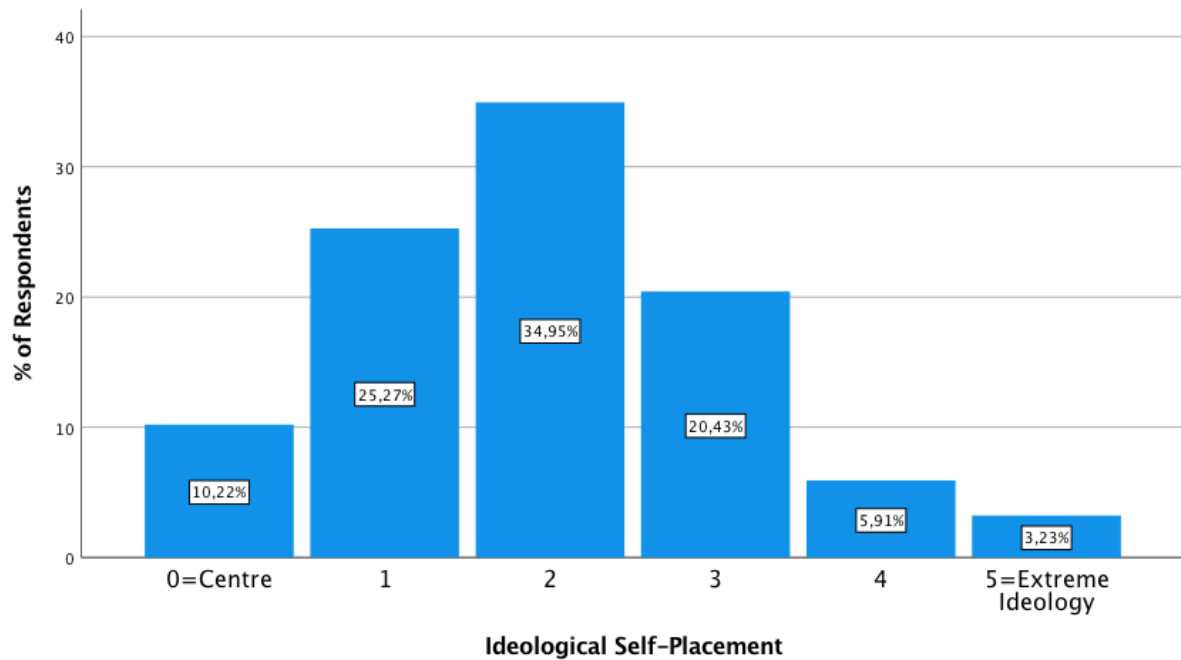
89 respondents have a left ideology and 32 participants have a right ideology. The remaining 65 respondent have no strong political ideologies or self-identify with the center. So, in my sample 47.8% place themselves on the left side of the political spectrum and only 16.8% on the right side of the political spectrum. Existing research on ideological self-placement in the Netherlands showed that in the age group between 18-34, 27% position themselves on the left side of the political spectrum and 26% on the right side of the political

spectrum (van Heck, 2019). If one looks at educational level, in the group with the highest educational level, 32% place themselves on the left side of the spectrum and 26% on the right side of the spectrum (van Heck, 2019), in this group the percentage of people placing themselves on the left is highest. Further, 28% of the women and 20% of the men place themselves on the left side of the spectrum and 26% of the women and 33% of the men place themselves on the right side of the spectrum. This indicates a more balanced left-right distribution in society than is represented in the current sample. In addition, it shows that the groups most likely to place themselves on the left of the political spectrum are female, highly educated people and people between 18-34 years old (or above 55 years old). As previously established, these are exactly the biases of the current sample, as it has an above average percentage of females, students and only takes into account people between 18-30 years old. Therefore, it is not too surprising, that the sample of this study is skewed more towards the left than the average Dutch population. It becomes visible that my sample is biased towards the left, with a large group of the respondents self-identifying on the left side of the spectrum.

In order to use ideology as a mediator, the variable was recorded to generate an index that goes from *center* (0) to *extreme ideology* (5), ($M = 1.96$, $SD = 1.18$). Consequently, my mediation model does not differentiate between left or right ideology, but only between extreme or moderate political ideology. However, this does not impact the statistical model or the outcome of the research in a negative way. Figure 3 displays the distribution of respondents between the center and extreme ideologies. From this figure it becomes clear that the majority of respondents do not have a very strong ideological position but that they do have a political stance.

Figure 3

Degree of moderateness of respondent's ideological position



Note. This figure displays the degree of moderateness of respondent's ideological position, regardless of a left-right differentiation.

EU support index

In order to measure EU support as my outcome variable, an EU support index was generated. The results can be seen in Table 1. Therefore, each item of the index was standardized and then all standardized items were added up resulting in an EU support index. Then I subtracted the minimum value from the EU support index and divided it by the range in order to have an index that ranges from *no EU support* (0) *strong EU support* (1) with $M = .6416$ and $SD = .16961$. This indicates a general support for the EU in my sample.

Table 1*Support for the EU*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Minimum	Maximum
Support for				
EU Unification*	4.92 (50%)	.94	2	7
EU Membership*	6.11 (70%)	.85	2	7
Trust in EU Institutions*	4.61 (66%)	1.06	1	6.75
Euro currency*	5.58 (80%)	1.04	2	7
EU key policies*	5.53 (79%)	.97	1	7
Solidarity towards EU*	5.19 (74%)	1.29	1	7

Note. The scale ranged from 1-7. The percentages should not be mistaken for accurate statistical analysis but should facilitate the interpretation of the results for the reader. The percentages indicate the support based on the means.

*combined scores

My study suggests that support for the EU in the Netherlands varies in different domains. This reinforces the previously made argument by De Vries (2018), that one should measure EU support with multidimensional concepts. When comparing the different domains from my study, it is visible that support for EU membership is the highest ($M = 6.11$), so the majority of the respondents are in favor of staying in the EU. ‘Trust in EU institutions’ is the lowest ($M = 4.6$), this reflects a common criticism of the EU. Nevertheless, it should be noted that although trust in EU institutions is the lowest score obtained in this study, it is still higher than the average, so the majority of my sample has trust in the EU institutions. Generally, there is overall support for the EU, as all means are above average ($M > 3.5$). In order to see whether my findings are somewhat representative of the Dutch population the results of the current study will be compared to the Eurobarometer, conducted 2 months prior to my own survey. The European Commission has conducted its semiannual public opinion survey in July-August 2020, two months prior to my own research. Therefore, it is valuable to compare my findings on the specific items to the findings from the Eurobarometer 93 study.

Table 2

*Support for the EU by Eurobarometer 93 compared to **current study***

	Eurobarometer	Current study	Eurobarometer	Current study	Eurobarometer	Current study
	Agree/ Trust		Disagree/ Don't trust		Don't Know	
Better future outside the EU	15%	7,5%	83%	88,2%	2%	4,3%
Trust in						
European Commission	60%	64%	30%	16,6%	10%	18,8%
European Parliament	62%	66%	34%	20%	4%	14,5%
European Central Bank	61%	44%	31%	22 %	8%	34%
Common policy on migration	86%	79%	11%	14,5%	3 %	7%
on defense and security	76%	76%	21%	14%	3%	10%
Free movement of EU citizens	83%	94,3%	14%	3.7%	2%	1.6%

Note. The percentages in bold are from the survey conducted for this paper. 'Don't know' was replaced with 'neither agree nor disagree' in the current study. Items from 'current study' were combined to facilitate comparison.

Some of the items used in my EU support index are taken from the Eurobarometer survey (European Commission, 2020). This allows a comparison of the answers. Table 2 portrays the respective percentages.

My findings seem to align with the findings from the Eurobarometer 93. The only noticeable differences in 'Agree/Trust' are trust in the European Central Bank (ECB), which is way lower in my sample than in the Eurobarometer sample and also lower than support for other EU Institution which all range between 60-70% (see Table 2). In my sample, fewer people are in favor of a common policy on migration. What should be taken into consideration when comparing these results is the high percentages of 'Don't know'

responses in my survey. In the current survey I phrased it as ‘neither agree nor disagree’ which might have led to a different response than ‘Don’t know’. I think the high rate of disagreement (‘Disagree/Don’t trust’) with the ECB could be linked, at that time, to the ongoing debate on Corona bonds, whereby the Dutch were against Corona bonds, and were in return portrayed as lacking solidarity across the entire Union. I think this negativity could reflect in lower support for the ECB. Additionally, as established previously, my sample is biased to the left, the increase in left ideological orientations could also be connected to seeing banks and financial institutions through a negative lens in general.

The higher support for the ‘free movement of citizens’ could also be explained by a bias in my sample. My sample contained a relatively large number of international students. It is very likely that international students are in favor of free movement of EU citizens, because this is what makes it relatively easy for them to study in the Netherlands. So, because my sample probably benefits more from free movement, it makes sense that my sample is more in favor of free movement than the average Dutch population. Interestingly, in my sample fewer people distrust the European institutions, but rather choose for ‘neither agree nor disagree’. These differences should be attributed to the different connotation ‘Don’t know’ has compared to ‘neither agree nor disagree’. Overall, the results show the same major trends as the Eurobarometer study.

Personality measurement

In order to include personality into my model. The mean of the component items for each personality trait were computed. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics per personality trait. The sample scored highest on agreeableness ($M = 4.24$) and lowest on neuroticism ($M = 2.83$).

Table 3

Descriptive statistics per personality trait

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Minimum	Maximum
Personality trait				
Openness	3.93	.70	2	5
Conscientiousness	3.43	.87	1.25	5
Extraversion	3.45	.87	1	5
Agreeableness	4.24	.64	2	5
Neuroticism	2.83	.92	1	5

Note. The scale ranged from 1-5.

Statistical Analysis

In order to answer the research question, and to determine whether my hypotheses are significant or should be rejected, I conducted a simple mediation analysis. Hereby, significant results will indicate that my hypotheses, “personality has a significant direct effect” (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1255) on EU support (H1) and “personality has a significant indirect effect” on EU support “mediated by ideology” (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1255) (H2) are significant. The PROCESS macro by Hayes (2018) was used to conduct the mediation analysis, after testing for linearity, in SPSS. Effects were deemed significant if the p-value was smaller than 0.05 and the confidence intervals did not include zero (Hemmerich, n.D.; Mediationsanalyse, n.D.). Table 4 summarizes the results for each personality trait. When determining the significance of the model, first of all the total effect needs to be significant. That is the combined effect of the direct effect and the indirect effect. The aim of this study is to find out whether there is an indirect effect. Therefore, we first look at the significance of the total effect. If the total effect is significant, one investigates the direct effect and the indirect effect.

If the total effect is insignificant no more investigation as to how much of that effect is attributed to direct and indirect influences is needed. No significant effect of openness on support for the EU was observed (see Table 4). The total effect size of the model is insignificant, $B = .02264$, ($p = .1946$). Therefore, I found no significant relationship between openness and EU support (neither direct nor indirect) and one can conclude that openness has no effect on EU support. Conscientiousness has no significant effect on EU support. The total effect size $B = .0168$, ($p = .2300$), as well as the direct and indirect effects were insignificant. Extraversion has no significant effect on EU support. The total effect size $B = .0078$, ($p = .5746$), as well as the direct and indirect effects were insignificant. An effect of agreeableness on EU support was observed, $B = .630$, $p < .001$, ($p = .0008$). I found that the indirect effect, mediated by ideology for agreeableness on EU support to be insignificant. This is the case, because zero lay within the confidence interval of that sample. I found the direct effect of agreeableness on EU support to be significant $B = .592$, $p < .01$ ($p = .0017$). No effect of neuroticism on EU support was observed, the total effect $B = -.008$, ($p = .5421$) was insignificant, so was the direct and indirect effect.

These results show that all total effect sizes, besides the effect size for agreeableness were insignificant. This means that the total effect was insignificant, and that there is no significant relationship between the variables at all. Therefore hypothesis 1 “personality has a significant direct effect” (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1255) on EU support and hypothesis 2 “personality has a significant indirect effect” on EU support “mediated by ideology” (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1255) can be rejected.

Nevertheless, I found a direct effect of agreeableness on EU support.

Table 4*Results from mediation analysis of personality mediated by ideology on EU support*

	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	Significance
Total Effect Size			
Openness	.22	.1946	insignificant
Conscientiousness	.17	.23	insignificant
Extraversion	.0078	.5746	insignificant
Agreeableness	.63	.0008**	significant
direct effect	.59	.0017**	significant
indirect effect	-	-	insignificant
Neuroticism	-.008	.5421	insignificant

Note. The indirect effect of agreeableness was insignificant, as 0 lays in the confidence interval.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Discussion

This study did not find evidence that “personality has a significant direct effect” (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1255) on EU support (H1). This result contradicts the previously established findings, that personality traits have a direct effect on EU support with the exception of agreeableness. My findings indicate that only agreeableness has a significant influence on EU support. This direct effect of agreeableness on EU support has been found in earlier research (e.g., Bakker & De Vreese 2015, Schoen, 2007). Scoring high on agreeableness seems to make people more supportive for international cooperation (Schoen, 2007, p. 408). As the EU is one form of international cooperation, it makes sense that people scoring high on agreeableness would also score high on support for the EU. Further, Schoen (2007) showed that people who scored high on agreeableness were in support of the Euro. The survey conducted in this research included an item on support for the Euro, therefore the direct link between agreeableness and support for the EU seems to be valid and in line with previous findings. Generally, this is in line with the findings of Curtis and Nielsen (2018) that “at least one of the B5 personality traits affects attitudes directly” in their five countries. Therefore, this finding can be extended with a sixth country. So not only in the five countries researched by Curtis and Nielsen (2018) but also in the Netherlands, at least one of the B5

traits affects EU support directly. Further, none of the personality traits were found to have an indirect effect on EU support that was mediated by ideology (H2). It logically follows that if this study was not able to show a link between personality and support for the EU, this relationship cannot be mediated by another variable, hence ideology. Therefore, my study could not replicate the findings of Curtis and Nielsen (2018), that ideology significantly mediates the effects of several personality traits. However, it is in line with the findings from the Bakker and De Vreese (2016, p. 25) study conducted in the Netherlands because my results also indicate “that the Big Five traits are associated with some EU attitudes.” In order to answer my research question, it is possible to say that only the personality trait of agreeableness has a direct effect on EU support. All other personality traits do not have a direct effect on EU support. Further, personality as a whole has no indirect effect on EU support that is mediated by ideology.

Conclusion

Prior studies have shown that personality has an influence on EU attitudes. Most of these, were focused on the direct effects and could not make generalizable statements concerning the indirect effects. Curtis and Nielsen's (2018) study was able to demonstrate that ideology is an impactful variable which connects personality and EU support. More specifically, they were able to show that "personality's indirect impact is quite substantial for all traits but extraversion" (Curtis & Nielsen, p. 1266) in Germany, the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Sweden. My goal was to extend these findings and strengthen them by conducting a similar study in the Netherlands. I was not able to replicate their findings that "at least one of the B5 affects attitudes directly" (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018, p. 1259), by showing that agreeableness has a direct effect on EU support in the Netherlands. Furthermore, I could not replicate their findings on the indirect effects.

Limitations and recommendations for further research

My study did not find evidence that ideology functions as a mediator of personality on EU support, therefore it did not replicate the findings of Curtis and Nielsen (2018). There are several possible reasons for that.

The first and most notable difference is the sample. My sample was relatively small and biased because there were more women, non-Dutch nationals, high educated and left oriented people than in the actual Dutch population aged 18-30. The fact that my sample is biased to the left could actually be a result of the aforementioned reasons (Van Heck, 2019). In a way this biased sample can also have advantages for the purpose of this study. Ideology can only affect EU support if an individual is aware of where they stand on the political spectrum. My sample is highly educated therefore it is more likely that the respondents in my sample know where they stand on the political spectrum and consequently that ideology has an effect on EU support.

Secondly, I was not able to report the specific mean of the age of my sample, as I only asked for age ranges and not specific birth years. Therefore, I would suggest to ask for the specific birth year to make more specific statements about the sample.

Thirdly, I had to exclude 75 people from my sample, which is not relevant for the specific outcome but a bigger sample allows for more generalizations and is more desirable. These initial respondents had to be taken out of my sample because they did not answer all the questions on the questionnaire or because they did not fit the sample population criteria. I should have foreseen that this could happen and program a 'force response' function to every

single questionnaire item. This significantly decreased the size of my sample. On the other hand, this also showed me that there might be a lack of knowledge about the EU, which prevented the participant from making choices since these were the questions mostly not answered. A force response option might have led to unqualified responses, just for the sake of finishing the questionnaire. So, I am not sure if forcing responses would have actually improved the validity and reliability of my survey. So, for further research I would recommend to program a force response function but also add 'Don't know' as an answer option.

Fourthly, this study used a different methodology than the study of Curtis and Nielsen (2018). Most notably, I computed the EU support index with more items (17 instead of 4) and did not use dummy variables for ideology but recoded ideology into one variable. Nevertheless, this yielded the advantage of a more differentiated EU support index.

Fifthly, next to the differences in methodology, another valid explanation for the differences in the results might be that I conducted my research in a different country. Therefore, differences might also be due to different attitudes in the Netherlands compared to the countries investigated by Curtis and Nielsen (2018).

Sixthly, my survey was written in English and a quite advanced level of English was actually necessary to fully comprehend the questionnaire. It would have been better to also provide a Dutch version of the questionnaire to reach bigger parts of the Dutch population. As the many blanks in my survey results could stem from difficulties in understanding the questionnaire.

Lastly, an additional limitation lays in comparing my EU support index to the Eurobarometer 93 results. In my current study I used the same wording on the questions, however my answer options were different than in the Eurobarometer survey in order to get a more nuanced picture. This however made it difficult to compare it to the Eurobarometer survey, as the Eurobarometer survey had fewer answer possibilities. Where people in my survey could choose between 7 answer possibilities, Eurobarometer only allowed for 3 different options. Upon replication of this study, a bigger sample size and a more diverse sample would be better because then the results could be more generalizable. It would be very interesting to see whether the outcome of the study would also change if one adopts a sample that is more representative of the 18-30-year-old population in the Netherlands.

While the results have been mainly insignificant, they nevertheless are important to the advancement of scientific research and a valuable contribution to the academic debate. This study demonstrates how a sample of the student population in the Netherlands self-identifies

on the political spectrum and what their stance on support for the EU is. The fact that my study was unable to replicate all the findings of Curtis and Nielsen (2018) emphasizes the impact different research designs can have on the outcome of the research. Additionally, it showed the importance and potential of including psychology into the field of public opinion. Generally, the current study put the study of European public opinion in new light and can serve as a starting point for further research.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire personality & EU support sorted by topic

Introduction

Dear Participant,

You have been invited to participate in my Master Thesis research on Ideology, Personality and EU Support in the Netherlands. In doing so you help me to graduate from my MA International Relations: European Union Studies at Leiden University. This involves fillin in a 5 min online questionnaire on your personality and political orientation. If you have any questions or would like to receive further information on this research, you can contact me, Ana-Rosa Schröder (a.l.schroder@umail.leidenuniv.nl) or my supervisor at Leiden University Dr. B. Shaev.

Informed Consent

I hereby declare to have been informed in a way that was understandable to me, on the nature and method of the research, as was also laid out in the information text.

My questions have been answered satisfactory.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

I obtain the right to withdraw this consent at any time, without having to provide a reason for this.

If my data will be used in scientific publications, or are published any other way, this will be done fully anonymized.

My personal data will not be accessible by third parties without my consent.

- I understand the statement made above and AGREE to participate in this study (1)
- I disagree to participate in this study (2)

Demographics

What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Other (3)
- Prefer not to say (4)

What is your age?

- 18-22 (4)
- 23-26 (5)
- 27-30 (6)

What is your nationality?

- Dutch (1)
- Another EU Country (please specify) (2)
- A country outside the EU (please specify) (3)

Where do you live currently?

- The Netherlands (1)
- Other (please specify) (2)

I am a student at Leiden University

- Yes (1)
- No, I am a student at another Dutch Educational Institution, namely (2)
- No, I am not a student (3)

What is the highest degree you have obtained (so far)?

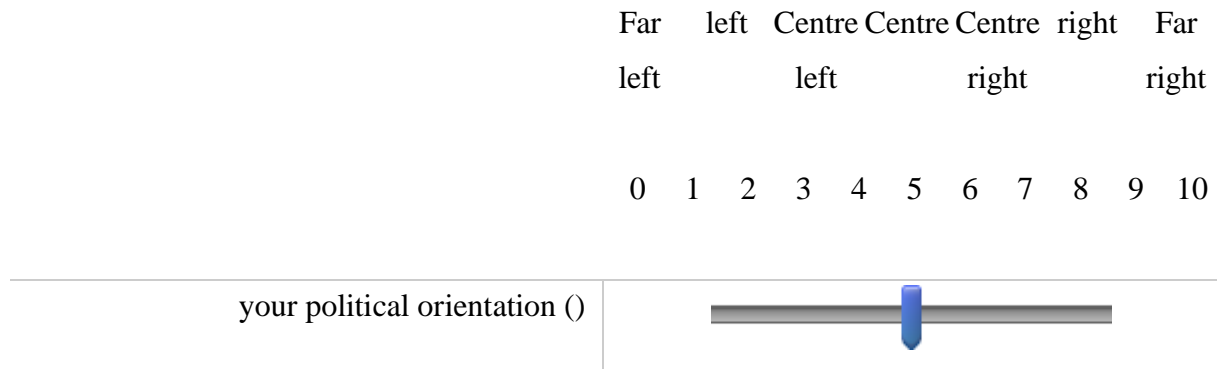
- High School Diploma (1)
- MBO (2)
- HBO (3)
- Bachelor Degree (4)
- Pre-Master Degree (5)
- Master Degree (6)
- Doctorate (7)
- Other (please specify) (8)

What is your current employment status?

- Student (with or without part time job) (1)
- Full time employed (2)
- Part time employed (3)
- Self-employed (4)
- Unemployed (currently looking for work) (5)
- Unemployed (currently NOT looking for work) (6)
- Retired (7)
- Unable to work (8)

Political Ideology

Where do you stand on the political spectrum?



EU Support

The following items were included in the questionnaire. Participants had to decide to what extent they agree with the statements.

The following scale was used:

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Somewhat disagree
- 4 Neither agree nor disagree
- 5 Somewhat agree
- 6 Agree
- 7 Strongly agree

Support for EU Unification

- European Unification has already gone too far (R)¹ (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018)
- I would like the Netherlands to leave the EU (NEXIT) (R)
- I prefer policy integration to speed up rather than to stand still

¹ (R) stands for reversed items

- I would be in favour of a completely unified European Union with a federal structure and one central European government.

EU Membership

- “Generally speaking, the Dutch membership in the EU is a good thing.” (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018)
- “The Netherlands could better face the future outside the EU” (European Commission, 2020) (R)
- I think the free movement of EU citizens who can live, work, study and do business anywhere in the EU is a good thing

Solidarity towards the EU

- I feel a sense of solidarity towards other EU countries

Trust in EU Institutions

- “I have a great deal of trust in the European Union institutions” (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018)
- I have a great deal of trust in the European Central Bank
- I have a great deal of trust in the European Commission
- I have a great deal of trust in the European Parliament

Support for the Euro

- “The Netherlands should leave the Eurozone and reinstate the Gulden” (R) (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018)
- The Netherlands should financially help EU countries in need

Support for European key policies

- I am for a common European policy on migration
- I am for a common European defence and security policy
- I think children should be taught in school about the way European institutions work

Big Five personality traits

Item Wording Mini-IPIP (Bakker & De Vreese, 2016)

The following items were included in randomized order in the questionnaire. Participants had to decide to what extent the statements accurately describe them.

The following scale was used:

- 1 Very inaccurate
- 2 Moderately inaccurate
- 3 Neither accurate nor inaccurate
- 4 Moderately accurate
- 5 Very accurate

Openness

- Have a vivid imagination
- Am not interested in abstract ideas (R)
- Have difficulty understanding abstract ideas (R)
- Do not have a good imagination (R)

Conscientiousness

- Get chores done right away
- Like order
- Make a mess of things (R)
- Often forget to put things back in their proper place (R)

Extraversion

- Am the life of the party
- Talk to a lot of different people at parties
- Don't talk a lot (R)
- Keep in the background (R)

Agreeableness

- Sympathize with others' feelings
- Feel others' emotions
- Am not interested in other people's problems (R)
- Am not really interested in others (R)

Neuroticism

- Get upset easily
- Have frequent mood swings
- Am relaxed most of the time (R)
- Seldom feel blue (R)

Appendix B

Questionnaire presented to participants exported from Qualtrics

Questionnaire Personality & EU Support

Start of Block: Information letter

Q42 Questionnaire Personality & EU Support

Dear Participant,

You have been invited to participate in my Master Thesis research on **Ideology, Personality and EU Support in the Netherlands**. In doing so you help me to graduate from my MA International Relations: European Union Studies at Leiden University. This involves filling in a **5 min** online questionnaire on your personality and political orientation. If you have any questions or would like to receive further information on this research, you can contact me Ana-Rosa Schröder (a.l.schroder@umail.leidenuniv.nl) or my supervisor at Leiden University Dr. B. Shaev.

End of Block: Information letter

Start of Block: Informed Consent

Q41 Informed Consent

I hereby declare to have been informed in a way that was understandable to me, on the nature and method of the research, as was also laid out in the information text.

My questions have been answered satisfactory.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

I obtain the right to withdraw this consent at any time, without having to provide a reason for this. If my data will be used in scientific publications, or are published any other way, this will be done fully anonymized.

My personal data will not be accessible by third parties without my consent.

- I understand the statement made above and AGREE to participate in this study (1)
- I disagree to participate in this study (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Consent = I disagree to participate in this study

End of Block: Informed Consent

Start of Block: Demographics block

Q31 What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Other (3)
- Prefer not to say (4)
-

Q32 What is your age?

- 18-22 (4)
- 23-26 (5)
- 27-30 (6)
- over 30 (7)
-

Q33 What is your nationality?

- Dutch (1)
- Another EU Country (please specify) (2)
-
- A country outside the EU (please specify) (3)
-

Q34 Where do you live currently?

- The Netherlands (1)
- Other (please specify) (2) _____

Skip To: End of Survey If Where do you live currently? = Other (please specify)

Q36 I am a student at Leiden University

- Yes (1)
- No, I am a student at another Dutch Educational Institution, namely (2)
-
- No, I am not a student (3)

Q39 What is the highest degree you have obtained (so far) ?

- High School Diploma (1)
- MBO (2)
- HBO (3)
- Bachelor Degree (4)
- Pre-Master Degree (5)
- Master Degree (6)
- Doctorate (7)
- Other (please specify) (8) _____

Start of Block: EU Support

Q5 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

(click on arrow to see the statements)



Q44 European unification has already gone too far

- Strongly disagree (7)
 - Disagree (6)
 - Somewhat disagree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat agree (3)
 - Agree (2)
 - Strongly agree (1)
-

Q45 Generally speaking, the Dutch Membership in the European Union is a good thing

- Strongly disagree (1)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Agree (6)
 - Strongly agree (7)
-

Q46 I have a great deal of trust in the European Union institutions

- Strongly disagree (1)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Agree (6)
 - Strongly agree (7)
-



Q36 I would like the Netherlands to leave the EU (NEXIT)

- Strongly disagree (7)
 - Disagree (6)
 - Somewhat disagree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat agree (3)
 - Agree (2)
 - Strongly agree (1)
-

Q37 I prefer policy integration to speed up rather than to stand still

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

Q38 I would be in favor of a completely unified European Union with a federal structure and one central European government

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)



Q39 The Netherlands could better face the future outside the EU

- Strongly disagree (7)
 - Disagree (6)
 - Somewhat disagree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat agree (3)
 - Agree (2)
 - Strongly agree (1)
-

Q40 I think the free movement of EU citizens who can live, work study and do business anywhere in the EU is a good thing

- Strongly disagree (1)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Agree (6)
 - Strongly agree (7)
-

Q41 I feel a sense of solidarity towards other EU countries

- Strongly disagree (1)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Agree (6)
 - Strongly agree (7)
-

Q42 I have a great deal of trust in the European Central Bank

- Strongly Disagree (1)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Agree (6)
 - Strongly agree (7)
-

Q43 I have a great deal of trust in the European Commission

- Strongly Disagree (1)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Agree (6)
 - Strongly agree (7)
-

Q44 I have a great deal of trust in the European Parliament

- Strongly disagree (1)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Agree (6)
 - Strongly agree (7)
-



Q45 The Netherlands should leave the Eurozone and reinstate the Gulden

- Strongly Disagree (7)
 - Disagree (6)
 - Somewhat disagree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat agree (3)
 - Agree (2)
 - Strongly agree (1)
-

Q46 The Netherlands should financially help EU countries in need

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

Q47 I am for a common European policy on migration

- Strongly disagree (1)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Agree (6)
 - Strongly agree (7)
-

Q48 I am for a common European defense and security policy

- Strongly disagree (1)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Agree (6)
 - Strongly agree (7)
-

Q49 I think children should be taught in school about the way European institutions work

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

End of Block: EU Support

Start of Block: To what extent do you identify with the following statements?

Q43 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

End of Block: To what extent do you identify with the following statements?

Start of Block: Big Five Personality Traits

Q10 I have a vivid imagination

- Very inaccurate (1)
- Somewhat inaccurate (2)
- Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
- Somewhat accurate (4)
- Very accurate (5)



Q11 I am not interested in abstract ideas

- Very inaccurate (5)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (4)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (2)
 - Very accurate (1)
-



Q12 I have difficulties understanding abstract ideas

- Very inaccurate (5)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (4)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (2)
 - Very accurate (1)
-



Q13 I do not have a good imagination

- Very inaccurate (5)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (4)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (2)
 - Very accurate (1)
-

Q14 I get chores/ tasks done right away

- Very inaccurate (1)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (2)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (4)
 - Very accurate (5)
-

Q15 I like order

- Very inaccurate (1)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (2)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (4)
 - Very accurate (5)
-



Q16 I often make a mess of things

- Very inaccurate (5)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (4)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (2)
 - Very accurate (1)
-



Q17 I often forget to put things back in their proper place

- Very inaccurate (5)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (4)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (2)
 - Very accurate (1)
-

Q18 I am the life of the party

- Very inaccurate (1)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (2)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (4)
 - Very accurate (5)
-

Q19 At parties, I talk to a lot of different people

- Very inaccurate (1)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (2)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (4)
 - Very accurate (5)
-



Q20 I don't talk a lot

- Very inaccurate (5)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (4)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (2)
 - Very accurate (1)
-



Q21 I keep in the background

- Very inaccurate (5)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (4)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (2)
 - Very accurate (1)
-

Q22 I sympathize with other person's feelings

- Very inaccurate (1)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (2)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (4)
 - Very accurate (5)
-

Q23 I feel others' emotions

- Very inaccurate (1)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (2)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (4)
 - Very accurate (5)
-



Q24 I am not interested in other people's problems

- Very inaccurate (5)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (4)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (2)
 - Very accurate (1)
-



Q25 I am not really interested in others

- Very inaccurate (5)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (4)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (2)
 - Very accurate (1)
-

Q26 I get upset easily

- Very inaccurate (1)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (2)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (4)
 - Very accurate (5)
-

Q27 I have frequent mood swings

- Very inaccurate (1)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (2)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (4)
 - Very accurate (5)
-



Q28 I am relaxed most of the time

- Very inaccurate (5)
 - Somewhat inaccurate (4)
 - Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
 - Somewhat accurate (2)
 - Very accurate (1)
-



Q29 I seldom feel blue (sad/depressed)

- Very inaccurate (5)
- Somewhat inaccurate (4)
- Neither accurate nor inaccurate (3)
- Somewhat accurate (2)
- Very accurate (1)

End of Block: Big Five Personality Traits
