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World Views

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to research the relationships between adverse childhood experiences, perceived control about one's own doing, relationship styles and political orientation. It is hypothesized that adverse childhood experiences, low perceived control and negative attachment styles are related to a more extreme political orientation. Results are undetermined because of such a similar demographic pool, but no relationship was found between adverse childhood experiences and political orientation. It is suggested by the data that relational styles have more to do with perceived control and general self-efficacy than what would be expected.

Background:

Adverse childhood experiences can set the pace for how an individual navigates their life. This can lead to success, or failure. For example, early socioeconomic poverty can set off a chain of psychological events increasing the likelihood of the development of depression, adverse family relationships, a negative view of self and poor coping mechanisms. (Culpin et al., 2015). Adverse childhood experiences can lead to poor relational styles, a low self-esteem and a low general self-efficacy. A political orientation may serve to counter these effects by serving as a feeling of psychological security in an individual's life. In a study by Caldwell et al. (2011) emotional abuse was tied to an increased level of self-criticism, lower self-esteem, social withdrawal, internalizing and externalizing behavior, negative attributional styles, and strained peer relationships. This study looks to analyze the features of adverse childhood experiences, relational styles, locus of control, general self-efficacy and to compare these to an individual's political orientation. A new contribution our study offers is to see whether locus of control, adverse childhood experiences, relational styles and general self-efficacy have a relationship with political orientation. It is proposed that adverse childhood experiences lead to a lowered sense of self efficacy, lower self-esteem, and less secure attachments that all result in a more extreme political orientation as a means of security and identity.

Method:

Participants (n= 54) were Minnesota State University Moorhead college students, seated in a private room to ensure confidentiality. The participants were volunteers who received extra credit for psychology courses. Sessions were conducted with one participant at a computer. Participants were told the experiment involves their world views on a series of different topics. The questionnaire included demographic information regarding age, gender, ethnicity, social economic status, year in school, and parent education level as well as other scales. The Spheres of Control (Paulhus, 1981) scale is a self-report measure of the perceivable control an individual believes they have in the world. It is a 30-item inventory with 7-point likert scale. The ICP Locus of Control scale specifically measures the belief of powerful others versus the force of chances. It is a 24 question self-report 7-point likert scale (Levenson, 1981).

The General Efficacy scale was used to cover the perceived control construct with correlated measurements to emotion, optimism and work satisfaction (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). It is a self-report measure of 10-items ranked 1-4.

Table 1: Sample Scale Questions

General Self Efficacy Scale

I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities
It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Scale

Did you ever feel like you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? Or your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?

Ideological Consistency Scale

The government is almost always wasteful and inefficient or
Government does a better job that people often give it credit for

The Experiences in Close Relationships- Revised (ECR-R) was used to measure secure versus anxious attachment styles in relationships. (Fraley et al., 2000). It is a 36-item self-report questionnaire with a 7-point scale where 1=strongly disagree and 7= strongly agree. The Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptom Self-Report scale from the DSM-5 (PSS-SR5) was used to measure the presence of trauma in an individual (American Psychological Association, 2013). This scale measures the frequency of symptoms or occurrences from 1-4 with 1 being, "not at all" to 4 being "6 or more times a week/severe. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) scale was used to report the amounts of trauma obtained in childhood (2010). This questionnaire is a 10-item forced choice measurement. The Political Ideological scale measures the degree to which one aligns with the typical liberal/conservative issues such as homosexuality, military strength and dispersion of wealth (Appendix A: The Ideology Consistency Scale, 2019). This 10-item forced choice scale has participants choose a liberal or conservative answer. Lastly, the Political Orientation scale is a single item 7-point likert scale with measures from zero as "extremely liberal" to seven as "extremely conservative" (Oraka et al., 2019). This is the most used scale in political research to obtain participant views. Upon completion of the survey, students were debriefed, allocated extra credit and excused.

Results:

There were 54 participants in our study. 74% of participants were female, 76% caucasian, 64% were between the ages of 18-22 years old and 69% of participants had a GPA over 3.0. Pearson's r correlations were computed to find relationships between adverse childhood experiences, perceived control, relational styles and political orientation.

Although we did not find significant relationships between political orientation and adverse childhood experiences $r=0.17$, $n=52$, $p=.227$, we did find reveal a significant finding between relational styles and general self-efficacy $r=-0.37$, $n=54$, $p=.006$. This shows that as discomfort in relationships increases, general self-efficacy decreases. A relationship between relational styles and powerful others locus of control showed a significant relationship, $r=0.43$, $n=54$, $p=.001$. This showed that increased relationship anxiety is correlated with that belief that when in a relationship, others are more powerful than yourself. Relational styles also showed a significant relationship with chance locus of control, $r=0.39$, $n=54$, $p=.003$. This data suggests that increased relationship anxiety and avoidance are correlated with the belief that luck has more control over your life than personal action does.

Table 2: Pearson's r Correlations Between Political Orientation, Relational Styles, Locus of Control, Spheres of Control, and General Self-Efficacy

	POLocus	ChanceLocus	IntPerSpheres	GSE
Political Orientation	0.04	0.09	0.32*	0.03
Relational Styles	0.432**	0.397**	0.02	-0.369**

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

POLocus= Powerful Others Locus of Control Scale, ChanceLocus=Chance Locus of Control Scale, IntPerSpheres= Interpersonal Spheres of Control Scale, GSE= General Self-Efficacy Scale

Political orientation did have one significant relationship with interpersonal spheres of control, $r=0.32$, $n=54$, $p=.026$. This suggest that the more positively someone views their ability to navigate interpersonal relationships relates with a more conservative political orientation. As expected, a conservative political orientation significantly negatively correlated with a more liberal ideology.

Conclusion:

This study suffers from a very similar demographic base of participants. As we continue to collect data, it will be interesting to see how results change based on responses of differing populations. Although there was not a significant relationship between adverse childhood experiences and political orientation, the data does show that there is a correlation between poor relational styles, a low sense of perceived control and lower general self-efficacy.

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