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Linking genetics and political attitudes: Reconceptualizing political ideology.

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Abstract: In this paper, we trace the route by which genetics could ultimately connect to issue attitudes and suggest that central to this connection are chronic dispositional preferences for mass-scale social rules, order, and conduct—what we label political ideology. The need to resolve bedrock social dilemmas concerning such matters as leadership style, protection from outgroups, and the degree to which norms of conduct are malleable, is present in any large-scale social unit at any time. This universality is important in that it leaves open the possibility that genetics could influence stances on issues of the day. Here, we measure orientation to these bedrock principles in two ways—a survey of conscious, self-reported positions and an implicit association test (IAT) of latent orientations toward fixed or flexible rules of social conduct. In an initial test, both measures were predictive of stances on issues of the day as well as of ideological self-labeling, thereby suggesting that the heritability of specific issue attitudes could be the result of the heritability of general orientations toward bedrock principles of mass-scale group life. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2012 APA, all rights reserved)

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