

The Paradox of the Free-Market Liberal

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The New York Times:

IN American politics, personality is, supposedly, destiny: Having a conservative personality makes us conservative on economic and social policy, and vice versa for liberals. Think of the stereotypes: the free-spending, libertine liberal; the rock-ribbed, free-market conservative.

But there's nothing natural about this pairing between personality and such broad ideologies. Instead, the structure of our ideological divide is shaped by political messaging rather than psychological differences. In fact, our research, which we recently published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, suggests that the personality characteristics that make someone culturally conservative will often tend to promote left-wing economic views, favoring redistributive economic intervention by the government. How is this possible?

Start by considering the most influential scholarly view of how personality affects political ideology: the “rigidity of the right” model. It holds that people differ from one another in terms of whether they are closed-minded and prefer what is familiar, or are open-minded and prefer diverse experiences.

Read the whole story: [*The New York Times*](#)