Debates over redistribution, social insurance, and market regulation are central to American politics. Why do some citizens prefer a large role for government in the economic life of the nation while others wish to limit its reach? In Open versus Closed, the authors argue that these preferences are not always what they seem. They show how deep-seated personality traits underpinning the culture wars over race, immigration, law and order, sexuality, gender roles, and religion shape how citizens think about economics, binding cultural and economic inclinations together in unexpected ways. Integrating insights from both psychology and political science – and twenty years of observational and experimental data – the authors reveal the deeper motivations driving attitudes toward government. They find that for politically active citizens these attitudes are not driven by self-interest, but by a desire to express the traits and cultural commitments that define their identities.

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CJ: For Amy and Hannah
HL: For my fathers, Ira S. Somerson and Edward W. Lavine
CF: For my mother

We’re born to be righteous, but we have to learn
what, exactly, people like us should be righteous about.

We do not see things as they are; we see them as we are.

The Talmud
Contents

List of Figures                      page viii
List of Tables                      xii
Acknowledgments                    xv
1 Personality and the Foundations of Economic Preferences   1
2 The Psychology of Ideology       19
3 A Dual-Pathway Model of Openness and Economic Preferences   39
4 Testing the Reversal Hypothesis  64
5 Openness and Partisan-Ideological Sorting                  111
6 Openness and Elite Influence     149
7 Political Engagement and Self-Interest                  195
8 Personality and American Democracy                    218

References                             247
Index                                    269
Figures

3.1 Two pathways from openness to economic opinion page 40
3.2 The rise of cultural concerns in party likes and dislikes over time 54
4.1 The relationship between authoritarianism and liberal economic values across political engagement, 2000–2012 ANES 74
4.2 The relationship between authoritarianism and economic policy liberalism across political engagement, 2000–2012 ANES 75
4.3 The relationship between authoritarianism and changes in support for government health insurance from 1992–1994 across political engagement, ANES 78
4.4 The relationship between need for cognitive closure and economic policy liberalism across political engagement, 2008 KN 83
4.5 The relationship between openness to experience and liberal economic values and policies across political engagement, 2008 CCAP, 2009 CCES, and 2012 ANES 89
4.6 The relationship between conscientiousness and liberal economic values and policies across political engagement, 2008 CCAP, 2009 CCES, and 2012 ANES 90
4.7 The relationship between openness to change vs. conservation and liberal economic values across political engagement, 2011 WVS 94
4.8 The relationship between risk preferences and authoritarianism and support for government spending and services across use of impersonal vs. personal considerations, 2009 ANES 98
Figures

4.9 The relationship between authoritarianism and liberal economic values and policies across political engagement for African Americans and Latinos, 2000–2012 ANES

4.10 The relationship between openness to experience and liberal economic values and policies across political engagement for African Americans and Latinos, 2012 ANES

4.11 The relationship between conscientiousness and liberal economic values and policies across political engagement for African Americans and Latinos, 2012 ANES

5.1 The relationship between authoritarianism and ideological self-labeling across political engagement, 2012 Model Politics

5.2 The relationship between authoritarianism and political partisanship and ideology across political engagement, 2000–2012 ANES

5.3 The relationship between authoritarianism and changes in partisanship from 1992–1994 across political engagement, ANES

5.4 The relationship between need for cognitive closure and political partisanship and ideology across political engagement, 2008 KN

5.5 The relationship between openness to experience and political partisanship and ideology across political engagement, 2008 CCAP, 2009 CCES, and 2012 ANES

5.6 The relationship between conscientiousness and political partisanship and ideology across political engagement, 2008 CCAP, 2009 CCES, and 2012 ANES

5.7 The relationship between openness to change vs. conservation and left-right identification across political engagement, 2011 WVS

5.8 The relationship between binding moral foundation importance and political partisanship and ideology across political engagement, 2012 CCES

5.9 The relationship between authoritarianism and liberal and conservative media choices across political engagement, 2012 Model Politics

5.10 The relationship between authoritarianism and the partisanship of primary political discussion partners across political engagement, 2000 ANES

5.11 The relationship between authoritarianism and political partisanship and ideology across political engagement for African Americans and Latinos, 2000–2012 ANES
Figures

5.12 The relationship between openness to experience and conscientiousness and political partisanship and ideology across political engagement for African Americans and Latinos, 2012 ANES

6.1 The moderating effect of partisan and ideological cues on the relationship between openness and economic policy liberalism across political engagement, 2011 YouGov experiment

6.2 Descriptive statistics for binding moral foundation importance in the 2012 CCES experiment

6.3 The moderating effect of partisan, ideological, and candidate cues on the relationship between binding foundation importance and economic policy liberalism across political engagement, 2012 CCES experiment

6.4 The moderating effect of candidate cues on the relationship between binding foundation importance and economic policy liberalism for engaged citizens, 2012 CCES experiment

6.5 The moderating effect of cultural signals on the relationship between authoritarianism and economic policy liberalism across political engagement, 2014 CCES experiment

6.6 The moderating effect of cultural and economic issues on the relationship between right-wing orientation and libertarianism across political engagement, 2015 GfK Experiment

6.7 The relationship between authoritarianism and support for import restrictions across political engagement for the full sample and for African Americans and Latinos, 2000–2012 ANES

7.1 The relationship between household income and liberal economic values and policies across political engagement for non-Latino whites, 2000–2012 ANES

7.2 The relationship between employment insecurity and support for employment and income protection across political engagement for non-Latino whites, 2000–2012 ANES and 2011 YouGov

7.3 The relationship between health insurance insecurity, coverage, and health status and support for government-provided and -regulated health insurance across political engagement for non-Latino whites, 2010 ANES, 2011 YouGov, and 2012 ANES
Figures

7.4 The relationship between household income and liberal economic values and policies across political engagement for African Americans and Latinos, 2000–2012 ANES

8.1 The relationship between racial resentment and economic policy liberalism across political engagement for non-Latino whites, 2012 ANES
Tables

4.1 Measurement of key variables in the American National Election Studies  page 72
4.2 Measurement of key variables in the 2008 Knowledge Networks Study  82
4.3 Measurement of key variables in the 2008 CCAP, 2009 CCES, and 2012 ANES  86
4.4 Measurement of key variables in the 2011 WVS  93
4.5 Measurement of key variables in the 22nd Wave of the 2008–2009 ANES Panel  96
A4.1 Estimates for authoritarianism in cross-sectional data  106
A4.2 Estimates for authoritarianism in panel data  107
A4.3 Estimates for need for closure  107
A4.4 Estimates for the Big Five  108
A4.5 Estimates for openness to change versus conservation  108
A4.6 Estimates for risk aversion and authoritarianism  109
A4.7 Estimates for authoritarianism among blacks and Latinos  109
A4.8 Estimates for Big Five among blacks and Latinos  110
A5.1 Estimates for authoritarianism and ideological labels  141
A5.2 Estimates for authoritarianism, partisanship, and ideology  142
A5.3 Estimates for authoritarianism in panel data  143
A5.4 Estimates for need for closure  143
A5.5 Estimates for Big Five  144
A5.6 Estimates for openness to change and left-right orientation  145
A5.7 Estimates for moral foundations, partisanship, and ideology  145
A5.8 Estimates for authoritarianism and media consumption  146
A5.9 Estimates for authoritarianism and political discussion partners  146
A5.10 Estimates for authoritarianism, partisanship, and ideology, blacks and Latinos
A5.11 Estimates for Big Five, partisanship, and ideology, blacks and Latinos
6.1 Treatments in the 2011 YouGov experiment
6.2 Items measuring openness in the 2011 YouGov experiment
6.3 Moral foundations items in the 2012 CCES experiment
6.4 Treatments in the 2012 CCES experiment
6.5 Treatments in the 2014 CCES experiment
6.6 Treatments in the 2015 GfK experiment
A6.1 Confirmatory factor analysis estimates
A6.2 Estimates for the 2011 YouGov experiment
A6.3 Estimates for the 2012 CCES experiment
A6.4 Estimates for the 2014 CCES experiment
A6.5 Estimates for the 2015 GfK experiment
A6.6 Estimates for authoritarianism and import restrictions
A7.1 Estimates for income and economic preferences, whites
A7.2 Estimates for job worries
A7.3 Estimates for health insurance worries
A7.4 Estimates for income and economic preferences, blacks and Latinos
8.1 The reversal effect with income and education interactions included
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