



Brief report

Relational tendencies associated with broad personality dimensions

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Out-patients ($N = 76$) completed measures of interpersonal motives and construals derived from relational models theory and a five-factor model personality questionnaire. A broader range of associations between personality dimensions and relational tendencies was obtained than interpersonal circle theorists propose, with dimensions other than extraversion and agreeableness having distinctive relational correlates. The interpersonal domain of personality may therefore be somewhat broader than many mainstream personality theorists suppose.

We expect people with different personalities to approach their relationships in distinctive ways. However, little research has systematically addressed links between interpersonal tendencies and broad personality dimensions such as the Five-Factor Model (FFM; Costa & McCrae, 1992). These links have been explored chiefly through the Interpersonal Circle (IC; Kiesler, 1983). Researchers have established that extraversion is associated with the IC's dominance/submission axis, and agreeableness with its warmth/coldness axis (Soldz, Budman, Demby, & Merry, 1993). Accordingly, FFM and IC theorists have usually defined the interpersonal domain by only two of the five primary dimensions of personality. Although they might allow that the three additional dimensions—neuroticism, openness and conscientiousness—might have a bearing on interpersonal behaviour, they have conceptualized them in asocial ways (i.e. as negative emotionality, cognitive flexibility and self-restraint) and neglected their interpersonal implications. Thus, Gurtman (1991) argues that if a personality trait fails to correlate with the IC's two axes it is 'non-interpersonal'.

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This delimitation of the interpersonal domain can be called into question. Personality dimensions beyond extraversion and agreeableness might be associated with distinctive interpersonal tendencies, and these might not be fully captured by the IC. Although extraversion, agreeableness and their corresponding IC axes certainly represent important coordinates of interpersonal life, it is possible that they can be supplemented by additional dimensions for a fuller appreciation of interpersonal tendencies. It has recently been argued (Haslam, Reichert, & Fiske, 2002), for example, that the IC does not capture some of the emergent properties of relationships (e.g. inequality, authority relations, communality). Tendencies to construe relationships in terms of these properties and to be motivated to engage in them—such as to perceive one's relationships in egalitarian terms or to seek out hierarchical relationships—cannot be located on the IC. Indeed, such 'relational tendencies' were found to be only weakly associated with the IC axes, and predicted personality disorder (PD) symptoms independently of them (Haslam *et al.*, 2002).

One approach to understanding relational tendencies is afforded by Relational Models Theory (RMT). RMT (Fiske, 1991) was developed out of a synthesis of social theories and ethnographic fieldwork in west Africa, and takes a more explicitly cognitive and cultural approach to sociality than most interpersonal theories employed in clinical psychology. The theory proposes that there are four fundamental models that people use to interpret, construct and evaluate relationships. These models are understood to be universal cognitive structures with which people coordinate their interpersonal lives, according to implementation rules and parameters supplied by their local cultures.

Communal sharing (CS) relationships are based on an understanding that relational partners are equivalent and undifferentiated and have a shared identity, and are common within romantic couples, families and sporting teams. Equality matching (EM) relationships, which are common among friends, are based on a sense of egalitarian balance: people keep track of favours and obligations and maintain balance by in-kind reciprocity, equal divisions of labour, and turn-taking. Authority ranking (AR) relationships, common in hierarchical organizations and between parents and children, are based on status asymmetries: one person leads and takes precedence and the other follows and defers. Market pricing (MP) relationships follow a principle of proportional equity, each person seeking to gain a suitable rate of return for their investment of time, money or effort, and are common within work groups. This RMT taxonomy has received extensive support as a model of people's cognition about relationships (Fiske & Haslam, 1996; Haslam, 1994), and has stimulated research across the social and behavioural sciences (Haslam, 2004).

To date, individual differences in the implementation of the relational models (RMs) have received little attention, and have only been linked to abnormal personality. Haslam *et al.* (2002) showed that people who had unusually strong motives to engage in relationships of each type, or who construed their personal relationships in terms of each RM to an unusual extent, tended to display distinctive patterns of PD symptoms (e.g. paranoid individuals tended to have relative strong motives for MP relationships and tended not to construe relationships in CS terms). In the present study, we therefore aimed to extend the earlier study by assessing the associations of RM-based relational

tendencies with dimensions of normal (i.e. non-pathological) personality. We predicted that relational tendencies would be associated with personality dimensions beyond extraversion and agreeableness, supporting the claim that the interpersonal domain of personality is broader than these factors. More specifically, we hypothesized that extraversion and agreeableness would correlate with tendencies to engage in close (CS and EM) relationships. We further predicted that neuroticism would be associated with tendencies to engage in AR relationships, given the generalized association between AR and PD symptoms found by Haslam *et al.* (2002). Finally, we predicted that Openness would be associated with egalitarian (EM) tendencies.

Method

Participants

Participants were 76 psychiatric out-patients (43 women, 33 men; mean age = 42.9 yrs) receiving treatment at two New York area clinics. The sample was multi-ethnic and most had primary diagnoses of mood or anxiety disorders. Participants were excluded if a brief screening showed evidence of organic brain disturbance or significant cognitive impairment.

Materials

NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992)

This 240-item self-report inventory is the most widely used FFM measure, and has strong evidence of reliability and validity.

Modes of Relationship Questionnaire (MORQ; Haslam & Fiske, 1999)

The MORQ assesses people's relative tendencies to construe a sample of their personal relationships in terms of the four RMs. It was implemented in similar fashion as in Haslam *et al.* (2002). Participants freely listed 20 acquaintances and then rated their relationship with every second acquaintance on a 20-item version of the original 32-item measure, using the five highest-loading items for each RM scale. Mean scale scores across the 10 rated relationships were then calculated. Because the MORQ is a measure of a person's preference for each RM relative to the others, these mean scores were ipsatized (i.e. scored as deviations from the person's mean standard score). Scale reliabilities were excellent (mean $\alpha = .86$).

Relationship Profile Scale (RPS; Haslam et al., 2002)

The RPS assesses participants' motives for engaging in relationships of the four types. Unlike the MORQ, therefore, it assesses motivations rather than cognitive construals, and offers a complementary perspective on relational tendencies (i.e. people might wish for certain kinds of relationships but construe their present relationships in different terms). Participants read paragraph descriptions of relationships governed by each RM used in previous research (Haslam & Fiske, 1992) and rated nine items

assessing the perceived importance of and desire for each kind of relationship. Scale reliabilities were excellent (mean $\alpha = .89$).

Results and discussion

Table 1 presents correlations among the measures. As predicted, many associations are evident, every personality dimension having at least two relational correlates. Extraversion and agreeableness were associated, as expected, with tendencies to construe and desire close relationships. Extraverts had stronger motives to engage in communal (CS) relationships and construed their relationships in a more egalitarian (EM) manner than introverts, but did not have stronger AR and MP motives, challenging the simple view that extraversion is associated with generalized sociability. Agreeableness was associated with communal but not egalitarian relating, implying that it is specifically linked to close relationships that do not demand strict balance. More agreeable individuals also construed relationships in asymmetrical terms (AR) less than others, and found these relations less desirable.

Table 1. Correlations between FFM dimensions and RMs measures (decimal omitted)

	Personality dimension				
	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
Communal sharing (CS)					
Construal	–25*	14	–02	39***	24*
Motivation	–27*	40***	10	23*	20
Equality matching (EM)					
Construal	–31***	25*	23*	–02	21
Motivation	–03	16	–08	–13	–08
Authority ranking (AR)					
Construal	30**	–20	–17	–28*	–25*
Motivation	–03	08	–28*	–24*	–11
Market pricing (MP)					
Construal	24*	–17	01	–17	–20
Motivation	02	02	–21	–15	–04

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

As predicted, participants higher in openness favoured egalitarian relationships more, and also found authority relationships less appealing. By implication, traditionalism and rigidity are associated with tendencies to perceive relationships in hierarchical terms and to discount egalitarian arrangements.

Neuroticism has a rich relational profile. More neurotic participants construed and desired communal relationships less than others, and were less apt to relate in an egalitarian fashion. Correspondingly, they construed relationships in more asymmetrical

and calculative or instrumental (MP) ways, the former result consistent with prediction. Whether this pattern reflects a disinterest in closer and balanced relationships or a withdrawal from their difficulties is unclear.

No predictions were made about differential correlations between the FFM dimensions and the motivational (RPS) and cognitive (MORQ) measures of particular relational tendencies. These correlations were usually not markedly discrepant, and they were in the same direction for most combinations of RMs and FFM dimensions. However, some interestingly discrepant correlations were found. Neuroticism, for example, was associated with a tendency to cognize relationships in AR terms but not with a motivation to engage in such relationships. Neurotic individuals may persistently think about the social world in asymmetric terms without desiring or enjoying—and perhaps even hating—asymmetrical relationships. An identical pattern of associations was previously obtained for avoidant PD (Haslam *et al.*, 2002), and arguably conveys the neurotic's conflicted sociality in a plausible way. Findings such as these support the value of assessing relational tendencies both motivationally and cognitively.

The findings of this study are preliminary and clearly require replication. The sample is somewhat modest, and although it was sufficiently powerful to detect many associations between the relational tendencies and the FFM dimensions a larger sample would enable a more sensitive investigation. More importantly, it remains to be seen whether the study findings would generalize to a non-clinical sample. Although FFM dimensions are commonly employed in clinical research and they were all reliably assessed with ample variance in the present sample, their associations with the RM measures might differ among people who are not suffering from mental disorders.

How the wide-ranging associations obtained between personality and relational tendencies should be theorized can also be debated. It could be argued that the relational tendencies are just loosely associated correlates of FFM dimensions that are not meaningfully interpersonal, or more radically that all of these dimensions are intrinsically interpersonal to some degree. Regardless, the present study's findings supply preliminary evidence that the interpersonal component of the FFM cannot be restricted to two of its dimensions, as FFM and IC theorists tend to assume. Rather, all of the primary personality factors have interesting and plausible relational correlates. Neuroticism, for instance, is not just emotional instability or negativity—an asocial or *intrapersonal* tendency—but it also has a distinctive interpersonal profile (i.e. distancing from close relationships and preoccupation with rank). Taking an RM-based approach may therefore enrich and expand our view of the interpersonal domain, with respect to normal personality as well as PDs.

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