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PERSONALITY CORRELATES OF ACCURACY IN A SOCIAL PERCEPTION TASK [1]

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Summary.—This study examined which aspects of personality were related to accuracy of social judgments. 45 individuals assessed rapport in a series of videotaped dyadic interactions and completed an extensive battery of personality measures. While judges were differentially successful at the task, no significant correlates of accuracy emerged.

Bernieri and Gillis (3, 4, 5, 8, 9) have recently described a series of studies in which subjects assessed the rapport in a series of dyadic interactions recorded on videotape. The criteria subjects (judges) attempted to predict were ratings made by the target interactants of the rapport they experienced, i.e., the composite self-reports of the two interactants. The reported judgmental accuracy (target-observer agreement) was unimpressive. Mean correlations between interactants' and observers' ratings of rapport across 50 videotaped interactions varied around .20; attempts to improve accuracy by providing feedback and simplifying the task had little effect (5). There were, however, marked individual differences in judgments. In one sample of 45 judges, correlations for accuracy ranged from −.12 to .54. Fourteen of these judges had accuracy scores significantly above chance.

In this same investigation judges completed a large battery of personality measures. The data reported here derive from an attempt to identify the personality correlates, if any, of differences in judgmental acuity. These correlates might clarify what particular skills or dispositions are being sampled by the social judgment task, i.e., assessing rapport; indeed, they might define the competency measured on these tasks.

While the initial identification of personality dimensions to be assessed was guided by a literature review, we finally looked at any variable which might plausibly be related to perceptual accuracy in a social context. Ultimately our judges were assessed on a battery of 96 different individual difference measures over a period of three months. These indices could be roughly grouped into four categories of (a) measures of personality traits and dispositions, e.g., California Psychological Inventory, Beck Depression Inventory, NEO Personality Inventory (6); (b) paper-and-pencil measures of social

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acuity [Social Skills Inventory (11), Hogan's Empathy Scale (10), Davis Interpersonal Reactivity Index (7)]; (c) performance measures of such acuity [Interpersonal Perception Task (1), Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity (12)]; and (d) general intelligence.

TABLE 1
CORRELATES OF ACCURACY IN JUDGMENT OF RAPPORT: A SUMMARY

Individual Difference Measure	$r_{accuracy}$
Sex	−.02
Personality	
California Psychological Inventory (CPI)	
Poise, Self-assurance (Class I)	.11
Socialization and Maturity (Class II)	.16
Achievement Potential (Class III)	.14
Interest Modes (Class IV)	−.19
NEO Personality Inventory (6)	
Neuroticism	.06
Extraversion	−.20
Openness	−.06
Agreeableness	.23
Conscientiousness	.21
Gender	
Femininity (CPI)	−.33*
Masculinity (2)	−.11
Femininity (2)	.08
Miscellaneous	
Internal Locus of Control (13)	.37*
Beck Depression Inventory	.15
Paper-and-pencil measures of social acuity	
Social Sensitivity (11)	−.06
Empathy (10)	.10
Interpersonal Reactivity Index (7)	−.03
Performance measures of social acuity	
Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity (12)	−.03
Interpersonal Perception Task (1)	.11
Intelligence	
Otis IQ	−.24
Raven's Progressive Matrices	−.01

Note.—$N = 45$. A more complete set of data is available from the authors upon request.
$^*p < .05$.

The association of each of these indices with the judges' accuracy scores was estimated. The emergent matrix appearing in Table 1 suggested that accuracy in judging rapport was unrelated to a wide spectrum of dispositions including intelligence. Accuracy correlated significantly with only two personality traits measured, California Psychological Inventory femininity and internal locus of control. Given the number of traits examined, this

number of significant correlations would be expected by chance. None of the several self-report or performance measures of empathy or social sensitivity had significant correlations with accuracy. This last is particularly puzzling since many of these scales and performance tasks purport to be tapping skills and sensitivities akin to what we call social perception. It may be that slightly different emphases in what the scales measure account for this lack of a relationship. For example, empathy scales include an affective component not involved in our task. Performance tasks such as the Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity and the Interpersonal Perception Task, while also requiring subjects to make inferences from videotaped presentations, involve stimulus materials quite different from ours.

Perhaps more likely is that each of these measures, self-report or performance, taps a different domain of what has been broadly labelled as social sensitivity and that this presumably unitary capacity is really a category label for a collection of very different propensities and skills. Thus far we have identified no meaningful pattern of personality correlates of accuracy in judgment of rapport, the aspect of social perception we have been studying.

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