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# “THE BEST MAN IN THE WORLD”: ATTITUDES TOWARD PERSONALITY TRAITS

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**Abstract**

This paper addresses the problem of attitudes toward traits, a bipolar evaluative construct. It is argued that attitude toward traits is a supplementary characteristic for conventional personality traits. In this regard, a second dimension of personality traits emerges where each trait can be characterized on another level, a level of attitudes. The study also demonstrates the psychometric utility of a Russian version of the Big Five Inventory (BFI; John, Donahue & Kentle, 1991; John, Naumann & Soto, 2008). The secondary factor structure of the Big Five corresponding to the hypothesis on stability/plasticity (DeYoung, Peterson, & Higgins, 2002) was obtained. The BFI was also shown to be employed as a tool to measure attitudes toward traits, and the five-factor structure was replicated as applied to attitudes toward traits. Different traits demonstrated different sizes of relationships with attitudes toward respective traits.

**Keywords:** Big Five, personality structure, social attitudes.

> If I were not myself, but the handsomest, cleverest, and best man in the world, and were free, I would this moment ask on my knees for your hand and your love!
>
> *Leo Tolstoy. War and Peace*

## Introduction

In contemporary personality psychology, the dispositional approach is one of the most dominant. Dozens of conceptions are developed; thousands of empirical studies are prepared. The idea that an individual’s opinions on

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their own actions, behavior and values is a crucial phenomenon, which characterizes individual mental differences, remains central for a tremendous number of personologists nowadays.

Meanwhile, the evaluative aspect of personality traits surprisingly has not to date become a subject of research within dispositional scope. Normally, researchers are interested in whether an individual believes this particular trait is *inherent* in her or his personality, or not. This appears in the prevalence of self-reports as a main instrument for obtaining empirical data in personality psychology — and at times even in temperamental and neurophysiological studies. However, the question that has not been put into effect is *how* an individual *evaluates* the trait in question *per se*; whether one considers it to be a positive or otherwise a negative trait. Such a characteristic — given a concept of social attitude — may be coined *attitude toward personality trait*.

It is striking, though, that people in everyday life frequently employ such attitudes intuitively. Thus, we talk about a "good temper", "the best man in the world", or we call this man "bad", bearing in mind we have negative attitudes toward his traits. We want to become "better" in that we want to shift our own traits toward those traits we consider "positive".

## *Personality traits*

Since Allport's (1937) seminal work, personality traits are treated as "the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behavior and thought" (p. 28). Since then, the assumption that individual differences are supplied by a number of units which are relatively independent from each other has become extremely fruitful. In the first place, those studies that come to mind are classic works by Cattell (1943) and Eysenck (1950) dated back to the mid-20th century. However, these popular taxonomies became gradually criticized since the mid-1980s under pressure from continuously gathered empirical data and developing methodology. A five-factor model, also known as the Big Five model (Costa & McCrae, 1995; Goldberg, 1981; Norman, 1963), has had the most success in this regard. As with its predecessors, the model posits that, on the most abstract level of analysis, the diversity of forms of "behavior and thought" can be reduced to a number of parameters — in this case, to the following five: extraversion, neuroticism (also mentioned as its antipode "emotional stability"), agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience (intellect). These five traits represent a hierarchical "tip of an iceberg" that hides a multitude of more particular facets[1] correlating within each trait.

In Soviet psychology, at least in its empirical-based wing, the trait approach has also been (and remains) a crucial one, the kinship of which has been largely appreciated, though not as a premise but rather as an opponent, a sort of "critique of foreign psychology".

[1] Alternative approaches to the Big Five also exist. Many studies employ earlier models, in particular Eysenck's three-factor model. Several alternative approaches are also developed which strive

In this vein, the notions of "qualities of personality", "qualities of temperament", and "qualities of character" are of great importance (e.g., Bogdanov, 1983; Krupnov, 2006; Levitov, 1964; Merlin, 1986, 1990; Rusalov, 1979). One should note that the closeness of these concepts engenders a substantial theoretical tension within the scope of differential psychology and attempts to determine their unique role relative to each other (e.g., Libin, 1999; Merlin, 1986; Slobodskaya, 2004). However, in recent years investigations of personality traits and qualities in Russia have started to acquire forms that are more integrated within the international context, whereas research in the context of the Big Five and other dispositional models seems to be quite organic (e.g., Egorova & Chertkova, 2011; Kniazev & Slobodskaya, 2005; Samoylenko, 2010).

### *Social attitudes*

The problem of social attitudes has been developed throughout the lifespan of the science. Social attitudes are normally treated as a sort of valent (positive vs. negative) evaluation of a given social object (Briñol & Petty, 2012; Olson & Zanna, 1993). The concept of attitude was initially used to define a person's readiness to respond effectively to a stimulus (Lange, 1888, as cited in Briñol & Petty, 2012). In the mid-20th century social attitude became a key concept for a growing discipline of social psychology (Briñol & Petty, 2012). A number of schools studying social attitudes appeared (Festinger, 1957; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; McGuire, 1985; Sherif & Sherif, 1967) including research prepared at Ohio State University (Brock, 1967; Fazio, 1995; Greenwald, 1968; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Within the scope of social attitudes, the bulk of important concepts have been developed including dual-process models (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), need for cognition (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982), attitude strength (Petty & Krosnick, 1995), metacognitions (Schwarz et al., 1991), evaluative conditioning (Martin & Levey, 1978), and many others.

### *Attitudes toward personality traits*

The research of bipolar attitudes toward mental phenomena has become widespread as a part of the more general investigation of metacognitions. In this respect, E. Harmon-Jones, Harmon-Jones, Amodio and Gamble (2011) have introduced a concept of attitudes toward emotions which are treated as subjective ratings of the latter. The authors posit that these ratings vary from negative to positive and are stored in the semantic memory. In the initial study it was shown that certain attitudes toward emotion may predict emotional situation selection or specific forms of emotional regulation. Moreover, attitudes toward emotions correlated differently with trait emotions depending on

either to undercut or consolidate the leading role of the Big Five (Cloninger, 1987; DeYoung, Peterson & Higgins, 2002; Digman, 1997; Musek, 2007; Rushton et al., 2009; Tellegen, 1985; Zuckerman, 2011). Reinforcement sensitivity theory (Gray & McNaughton, 2000) plays a particular role, which is a psychometrically dispositional theory but positions itself as a more general model of basic forms of mammals' behavior.

whether those emotions were either approach or withdrawal (ibid.). I treat the concept of attitudes toward traits similarly to that of attitudes toward emotions in that it is also a bipolar attitude of an individual toward a mental phenomenon stored in the semantic memory.

Analysing theoretically the notion of self-consciousness, Merlin (1990), among other things, described its component of *social moral self-esteem*. In accordance with this concept, an individual assesses one's qualities in the perspective of "a social moral value" (p. 87). The social moral value is a function of some "connection" between an individual's self-esteem and social moral self-esteem. Such a connection is apparently treated as the degree to which an individual believes her or his mental characteristics, including personality, fit her or his social moral standards. Unlike the concept of social moral self-esteem, attitudes toward traits do not presume the reference of a given trait to one's own personality. Attitudes toward traits rather presume an evaluation of a given trait in an abstract manner having no direct reference to any particular personality. Individuals presumably employ different prototypes to establish such attitudes, but attitudes *per se* remain rather a semantic phenomenon, being attached to neither particular individual including oneself.

In a classic study by Allport and Odbert (1936), the initial 18,000 personality descriptors were broken down into four categories. Only 4,504 of them were relevant to the description of personality. The remainder comprised the descriptors and temporal conditions (moods), physical characteristics and capacities which are irrelevant to personality, and — of importance — highly evaluative judgments of personal conduct and reputation such as *excellent, average,* or *irritating* (as cited in John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008). Subsequently many authors underlined the appropriateness of the groups of temporal conditions and social evaluations for personality investigation (e.g., Almagor, Tellegen, & Waller, 1995; Waller & Zavala, 1993). In this vein, Almagor et al. (1995), based on their empirical findings, have extended the Big Five to the Big Seven, adding two valent traits, positive and negative valences. The authors herein demonstrated that such a model was confirmed in terms of exploratory factor analysis. Positive valence characterizes extremely positive descriptions of one's personality (being, for instance, exceptional, important, clever). Negative valence, on the other hand, characterizes extremely negative descriptions of one's personality (being, for instance, evil, amoral, disgusting). Unlike positive/negative valence, attitudes toward traits are not considered as separate personality traits; they instead may be supplementary characteristics of any existing trait. Thus, attitudes toward traits do not extend the number of traits but rather constitute a "second dimension" of personality traits, where each trait can be characterized on another level, a level of social evaluations.

Throughout the entire history of personality traits research, social desirability has been treated as a source of measurement error (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Thorndike, 1920). The halo effect (Thorndike, 1920), which inclines one to ascribe socially desirable characteristics to oneself or someone else, is considered

as an important artifact preventing an individual from an adequate assessment of that trait. However, this artifact can be treated from another perspective, as a particular characteristic of personality, relatively independent of traits (cf. the idea of evaluative factor in personality; Bäckström & Björklund, 2014). This characteristic taps into social attitudes toward traits themselves.

Leising, Erbs and Fritz (2010) found that an observer's ratings of their target's traits relate linearly with the degree of sympathy the former feels to the latter. The sympathy correlated positively with the degree how extraverted, agreeable, conscientious, open, and emotionally stable the target was seen to be. One may presume that the factor that urges informants to rate appealing targets from certain angles is attitudes toward traits. It is possible that in contemporary society individuals have stable positive attitudes toward extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to new experience, which are responsible for effects as those reported by Leising et al. (2010).

One of the crucial points of the five-factor theory (McCrae & Costa, 1996, 2013) is the idea of heritability of traits as *basic tendencies*. However, the authors still admit that the environment affects individual differences, but this impact is brought out on the limits of the Big Five, in a special territory called *characteristic adaptations*. Attitudes toward traits can possibly be considered in the spirit of McCrae and Costa as characteristic adaptations which are determined by interactions between an individual and a particular environment and culture, as with any other social attitudes. In this case, traits should be treated as sorts of predictors for attitudes toward traits.

Now, I assume that individuals differ not only with respect to social reality and corresponding actions but also with respect to their evaluations of individual differences. I presume that individuals can evaluate personality qualities as abstract concepts, without addressing them directly to their own traits. Thus, an individual may consider conscientiousness and gregariousness extremely positive traits but hostility and creativity as utterly negative ones. However, another individual may regard them in the opposite way. I also presume that traits differ empirically from attitudes to traits. Thus, an individual may regard conscientiousness extremely positively, but at the same time may consider her or himself as "unconscientious".

This study addresses the following problems: can a questionnaire initially measuring personality traits be modified to measure attitudes toward traits? Does the factor structure of attitudes toward traits fit to the factor structure of traits? Do traits correlate to attitudes toward corresponding traits? What is the mutual structure of traits and attitudes toward traits?

## Method

### *Participants*

Participants were 1,079 inhabitants of an administrative center of Russia aged from 17 to 38 years (M = 19.79, SD = 1.91) including 349 males (32.3%)

### *Questionnaires*

They filled out two measures of the Big Five. A Russian version of the first

measure, the Big Five Inventory (BFI; Benet-Martinez & John, 1998; John, Donahue & Kentle, 1991; John et al., 2008), has been invented for the purposes of this study[2]. The second measure was a 50-item version of the International Personality Items Pool (IPIP; Goldberg, 2001), also presented to participants in its Russian version (Kniazev, Mitrofanova, & Bocharov, 2010). The BFI is a list of 44 short phrases characterizing a given trait (e.g., *does things efficiently*). The scale of the BFI run from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 5 (*agree strongly*). The question stem preceding the items is as follows: *I see myself as someone who...*, which makes participants address each phrase to themselves. The entire text of the BFI has been translated into Russian by the author of the article. The text has been further back-translated by a US expert of Russian descent holding a master's degree in psychology. The discrepancies that appeared were discussed and corrected.

The subscales of the IPIP have demonstrated an acceptable degree of internal consistency, $\alpha$ = .90, .79, .81, .90, .78 for extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and intellect respectively.

Two measures of personality, IPIP and BFI, demonstrated a good convergent validity for each of the five subscales, *r*s = .83, 56, .75, .82, .71, for extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness respectively. The average inter-trait inter-method correlation was $r$ = .16, which provides evidence of divergent validity of both measures.

To evaluate attitudes toward personality traits, we modified the BFI by changing the instructions, the scale and various phrases. In particular, the pool of items was preceded by the following instructions:

Please indicate what you think about the personality characteristics listed below. Do you find the characteristic in question to be positive or negative? It does not matter whether you have this particular characteristic or not: simply *evaluate* it as it is.

Participants rated each item on a 5-point scale from 1 (*a very bad trait*) to 5 (*a very good trait*). The question stem has been changed onto *I see this trait of a person...* I also modified the item wordings slightly to correspond with the scale and the instructions (see Table 3). Subsequently for the purpose of internal consistency improvement and obtaining of a simple five-factor structure, some items were eliminated (see the Results section). As a result, 36 out of 44 initial BFI items were included into the version measuring attitudes toward traits. Some items had random missing values of up to 16 per item, and the mean number of missing values per item was 3.00 (0.28%). Before any further calculations, the linear trend at point method was applied as a data imputation procedure.

## Results

### *Factor structure and internal consistency*

*1. Personality traits.* To examine whether the BFI is acceptable as a measure of attitudes toward traits, I rated the internal consistency and construct validity of the measure. I also assessed these parameters for the BFI preliminarily in its original form that measures traits.

[2] The Russian version of BFI is available upon request from the author.

The factor structure of personality traits measured by the BFI was fixed at five factors. In general, those five factors were identical to five traits (Table 1). However, the eigenvalue of $\lambda = 44.04\%$ provides evidence of quite large residuals. They can be a result of either random errors or substantial correlations of items that constitute different subscales. Meanwhile, the subscales of the BFI showed acceptable levels of internal consistency, $\alpha = .78, .68, .79, .79, .80$ for extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness, respectively.

Pearson correlations of mean scores of traits were weak in the vast majority

*Table 1*

**Items of the Big Five Inventory measuring personality traits**

| Items | Components | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21 tends to be quiet (r) | .08 | **.79** | −.03 | .02 | .02 |
| 01 is talkative | .15 | **.77** | .01 | .08 | .01 |
| 36 is outgoing, sociable | .20 | **.77** | .06 | .04 | .04 |
| 11 is full of energy | *.32* | **.57** | .23 | −.22 | .07 |
| 06 is reserved (r) | .01 | **.55** | −.26 | .32 | −.21 |
| 31 is sometimes shy, inhibited(r) | −.14 | **.45** | −.01 | −.39 | −.14 |
| 26 has an assertive personality | .16 | **.40** | .30 | −.45 | −.14 |
| 16 generates a lot of enthusiasm | ***.66*** | **.23** | .04 | −.06 | .03 |
| 37 is sometimes rude to others (r) | −.01 | −.13 | .09 | −.21 | **.67** |
| 27 can be cold and aloof (r) | −.06 | .14 | −.01 | .02 | **.66** |
| 02 tends to find fault with others (r) | .00 | −.27 | .11 | −.16 | **.56** |
| 12 starts quarrels with others (r) | −.03 | −.18 | .15 | −.13 | **.56** |
| 22 is generally trusting | .05 | .15 | −.00 | .06 | **.41** |
| 07 is helpful and unselfish with others | .17 | .02 | .27 | .00 | **.40** |
| 17 has a forgiving nature | .22 | .17 | .08 | .02 | **.40** |
| 32 is considerate and kind to almost everyone | .22 | −.19 | ***.39*** | −.02 | **.26** |
| 42 likes to cooperate with others | .15 | ***.46*** | .13 | −.06 | **.16** |
| 03 does a thorough job | .10 | −.00 | **.71** | .09 | .00 |
| 28 perseveres until the task is finished | −.01 | .02 | **.69** | −.08 | −.01 |
| 33 does things efficiently | .20 | .14 | **.69** | .01 | −.03 |
| 13 is a reliable worker | .11 | .02 | **.68** | .10 | .00 |
| 18 tends to be disorganized (r) | −.14 | .04 | **.60** | −.06 | .19 |
| 23 tends to be lazy (r) | −.07 | .14 | **.55** | −.06 | .27 |
| 43 is easily distracted (r) | −.09 | −.07 | **.51** | −.15 | .16 |
| 38 makes plans and follows through with them | .08 | −.02 | **.48** | −.08 | −.29 |

*Table 1 (continued)*

| Items | Components | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 08 can be somewhat careless (r) | −.17 | .11 | **.45** | −.07 | .23 |
| 24 is emotionally stable, not easy upset (r) | −.04 | .08 | −.05 | **.75** | −.00 |
| 39 gets nervous easily | .03 | .06 | −.05 | **.75** | −.23 |
| 09 is relaxed, handles stress well (r) | −.02 | −.06 | −.06 | **.71** | −.08 |
| 19 worries a lot | .08 | −.02 | .11 | **.61** | .04 |
| 34 remains calm in tense situations (r) | −.16 | .22 | −.23 | **.61** | −.01 |
| 14 can be tense | .10 | −.15 | .12 | **.50** | *−.36* |
| 04 is depressed, blue | −.04 | *−.38* | −.06 | **.46** | −.11 |
| 29 can be moody | .05 | ***−.37*** | −.02 | **.34** | ***−.45*** |
| 05 is original, comes up with new ideas | **.68** | .26 | .06 | -.06 | .03 |
| 15 is ingenious, a deep thinker | **.66** | .21 | .02 | -.13 | −.11 |
| 20 has an active imagination | **.64** | .13 | −.07 | -.01 | −.07 |
| 30 values artistic, aesthetic experiences | **.63** | −.16 | .03 | .22 | .23 |
| 44 is sophisticated in art, music, or literature | **.63** | −.09 | −.08 | .10 | .16 |
| 25 is inventive | **.62** | .23 | .15 | −.24 | −.08 |
| 41 has few artistic interests (r) | **.58** | −.11 | .01 | .17 | .26 |
| 10 is curious about many different things | **.57** | .24 | .11 | −.11 | .04 |
| 40 likes to reflect, play with ideas | **.47** | −.14 | .06 | .11 | −.16 |
| 35 prefers work that is routine (r) | **.32** | .18 | −.22 | −.00 | −-.00 |
| Eigenvalue, % | 10.73 | 10.04 | 9.93 | 9.59 | 7.69 |

*Note*. Principal components method, Varimax rotation, fixed at 5 components. Sequence number in the questionnaire is placed in front of item names. (r) — reversed item. Factor weights of items conceptually included in the following subscale are bolded. Other weights above .30 are italicized. Weights on "alien" factors that exceed weights on "own" factors are italicized and emboldened. Component 1 pertains to openness, component 2 to extraversion, component 3 to conscientiousness, component 4 to neuroticism, component 5 to agreeableness.

of cases but significant in terms of null hypothesis rejection (see Appendix).

The factor structure (Table 2) consisted of two components that explained 56.25% of the overall variance. The first component was constituted by agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism, whereas the second component was constituted by extraversion and openness.

*2. Attitudes toward traits.* A number of items were eliminated from the attitudinal BFI version because a clear five-factor structure employing all the 44 items had not been obtained. After that, internal consistency was acceptable,

*Table 2*

**Factor structure of five indicators of personality traits**

| | Components | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 |
| Openness | .01 | **.82** |
| Extraversion | .11 | **.81** |
| Agreeableness | **.77** | .01 |
| Neuroticism | **−.67** | −.11 |
| Conscientiousness | **.64** | .03 |
| Eigenvalue, % | 32.52 | 23.73 |

α = .68, .68, .72, .69, .80 for attitudes toward extraversion (5 items), agreeableness (7 items), conscientiousness (8 items), neuroticism (7 items) and openness (9 items), respectively.

Five components corresponding to five personality traits have been thus identified (Table 3). In the case of attitudes toward traits, 41.20% of the variance was explained, which also presumes a presence of substantial residual correlations.

Attitudes toward different traits correlated between each other in the range from weak to moderate (see Appendix). Paired correlations were $r < .40$, although factor analysis revealed a one-factor solution with the only component that explained 39.03% of variance. Therefore, one may suppose that attitudes toward traits, firstly, were distinguishable between each other and, secondly, correlated between each other moderately. Finally, the one-factor structure of attitudes toward traits differed from the two-factor structure of traits.

### *Correlations between traits and attitudes toward traits*

The next issue concerned the relationships between traits and attitudes toward traits. In this regard, I carried out Pearson correlations hypothesizing them to be moderate. Because attitudes toward traits were measured by a questionnaire developed using the BFI, and thus correlations of traits and respective attitudes can be explained by shared method variance, traits were assessed by two self-report measures, the BFI and the IPIP. As a consequence of this, a quite versatile pattern of correlation was obtained which was reconstructed for both measures of traits. In particular, in three instances, the links between traits and attitudes were strong. Thus, extraversion correlated positively with attitude toward extraversion, *r*s = .47 (trait measured with IPIP) and .44 (trait measured with BFI); agreeableness correlated positively with the respective attitude, *r*s = = .45 (IPIP) and .49 (BFI); and openness correlated positively with the corresponding attitude, *r*s = .44 (IPIP) and .58 (BFI). These findings provide evidence that individuals who are extraverted, agreeable and open to new experiences have, at the same time, positive attitudes toward the corresponding traits. This also means that individuals who are introverted, disagreeable and closed

*Table 3*

**Big Five Inventory items that measure attitudes toward personality traits**

| Items | Components | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 01 talkativeness | .01 | .01 | .05 | **.74** | .10 |
| 36 outgoingness, sociability | .15 | .09 | −.09 | **.73** | .15 |
| 21 quietness (r) | −.09 | −.11 | *−.33* | **.54** | .11 |
| 11 energy | .20 | *.35* | −.06 | **.51** | .01 |
| 26 assertive personality | .12 | *.32* | −.18 | **.37** | −.08 |
| 27 coldness and aloofness (r) | .02 | -.07 | −.12 | .11 | **.68** |
| 37 rudeness to others (r) | .07 | .16 | −.25 | .03 | **.61** |
| 02 tendency to find fault with others (r) | −.03 | .11 | −.19 | −.24 | **.57** |
| 17 forgiving nature | .14 | .00 | .10 | .14 | **.54** |
| 21 Helpfulness and unselfishness with others | .16 | .10 | .12 | .14 | **.53** |
| 12 quarrelsomeness (r) | −.13 | .16 | −.20 | −.20 | **.53** |
| 22 trustfulness | .05 | -.00 | .08 | .26 | **.48** |
| 28 perseverance until the task is finished | .11 | **.64** | −.02 | .06 | .05 |
| 33 doing things efficiently | .16 | **.64** | −.05 | .08 | .06 |
| 03 doing a thorough job | .08 | **.63** | .04 | .11 | .08 |
| 13 reliable worker | .06 | **.57** | −.00 | .05 | .15 |
| 18 tendency to be disorganized (r) | −.10 | **.51** | *−.33* | −.03 | .05 |
| 23 laziness (p) | −.07 | **.47** | −.25 | −.01 | .10 |
| 38 making plans and following through with them | .12 | **.46** | −.02 | .08 | −.11 |
| 08 carelessness (p) | −.12 | **.43** | *−.31* | −.02 | .16 |
| 39 tendency to get nervous easily | −.09 | -.17 | **.62** | .07 | −.03 |
| 19 worry | −.02 | .03 | **.61** | .05 | .15 |
| 14 tension | −.07 | -.09 | **.60** | −.12 | −.13 |
| 29 moodiness | −.05 | -.06 | **.58** | −.28 | −.25 |
| 04 depression, blues | .01 | -.14 | **.56** | −.23 | −.09 |
| 24 emotional stability (r) | −.11 | *−.31* | **.35** | −.01 | .03 |
| 34 calmness in tense situations (r) | −.12 | ***−.37*** | **.30** | .05 | −.01 |
| 30 appreciation of artistic, aesthetic experiences | **.72** | .01 | −.01 | −.12 | .22 |
| 44 sophistication in art, music, or literature | **.69** | -.02 | −.13 | −.14 | .17 |
| 41 lack of artistic interests (r) | **.66** | -.10 | −.17 | −.20 | .14 |
| 20 active imagination | **.62** | .14 | −.06 | .22 | −.03 |

*Table 3 (continued)*

| Items | Components | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15 ingenious, deep thinker | **.59** | .23 | −.06 | .28 | −.09 |
| 40 love for reflection, play with ideas | **.55** | .04 | .12 | .04 | −.02 |
| 25 inventiveness | **.51** | *.39* | −.12 | .23 | −.02 |
| 10 curiousness about many different things | **.50** | .11 | −.04 | *.31* | −.02 |
| 05 originality, ability to come up with new ideas | **.49** | .24 | .03 | *.35* | .07 |
| Eigenvalue, % | 11.17 | 11.83 | 8.97 | 9.03 | 7.83 |

*Note.* Principal components method, Varimax rotation, fixed at 5 components. Sequence number in the questionnaire is placed in front of item names. (r) – reversed item. Factor weights of items conceptually included in the following subscale are emboldened. Component 1 pertains to openness, component 2 to extraversion, component 3 to conscientiousness, component 4 to neuroticism, component 5 to agreeableness.

to new experiences have negative attitudes toward the corresponding traits.

The relationship between conscientiousness and attitude toward this trait was moderate, *r*s = .32 (IPIP) and .33 (BFI). Lastly, the relationship between neuroticism and attitude toward neuroticism was weak though statistically significant due to the large sample size, *r*s = .14, $p < .001$ (IPIP) and .13, $p < .001$ (BFI).

### *Shared structure of the Big Five and attitudes toward traits*

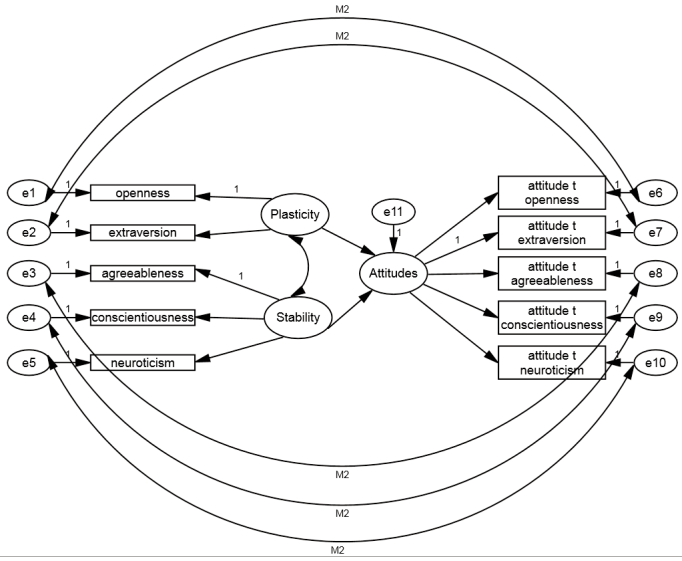
To examine the relationships between traits and attitudes toward traits further, two models were tested. They include three latent factors comprised of correlations between traits and attitudes toward traits. Given the aforementioned exploratory factor analysis findings, two latent factors, higher-order factors of the Big Five (DeYoung et al., 2002) characterize traits and correspond to plasticity and stability. If one assumes that traits are inheritable structures (McCrae & Costa, 2013) whereas attitudes toward them are characteristic adaptations (ibid.), then one can further assume that the former affects the latter. Model 1 (default) does not presume co-variations of factor errors. Plasticity and stability factors were allowed to co-vary freely. The plasticity factor included extraversion and openness; the stability factor included agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism.

We had little reason to presume empirical data to support this model because we already knew that traits correlated with their respective attitudes. In this regard, an alternative Model 2 was also examined which presumes that the factor error of a given trait (e.g., extraversion) co-varies with the factor error of its respective attitude (e.g., attitude toward extraversion). Figure 1 represents both models.

As expected, Model 1 fitted our data poorly, $\chi^2(32) = 1218.27$; *GFI* = .82; *AGFI* = .70; *RMSEA* = .18; *RMR* = .03; *HOELTER* .05 = 41. This weak model

*Figure 1*

**Personality traits as predictors of attitudes toward traits**




*Note*. M2 — covariations varied freely in Model 2 and set to zero in Model 1.

fit presumably results from substantial correlations between traits and respective attitudes. If so, then the model with correlated errors should be substantially more adequate.

Model 2 (Figure 2) demonstrated fit indices that generally provide evidence of its acceptability or at least come very close to the rule-of-thumb landmarks, $\chi^2(27) = 177.77$; *GFI* = .97; *AGFI* = .94; *RMSEA* = .07; *RMR* = .02; *HOELTER* .05 = 244. Moreover, Model 2 was substantially better compared to Model 1, $\Delta\chi^2(5) = 1040.5$, $p < .001$. One should also note that the regression weight of the link between latent factors of stability and attitudes toward traits was negligible and statistically insignificant, $p = .115$.

I implemented no further modifications of parameters to improve fit indices because these actions would be quite chaotic in this case, having no theoretical background.

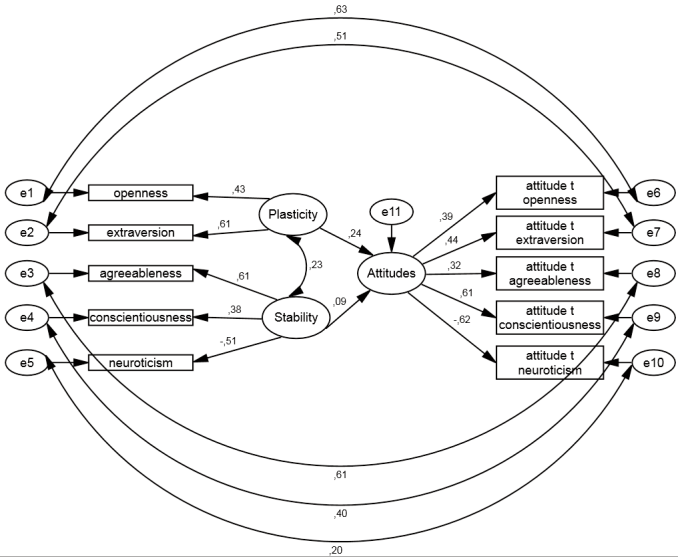
## Discussion

The present study is a first step towards the investigation of attitudes toward personality. For this purpose, I modified a conventional personality questionnaire that measures a five-factor model — the Big Five Inventory — adopting it to measure attitudes toward traits. A large sample was used to prepare an empirical study. The internal consistency of all five subscales that measured attitudes was acceptable, though somewhat weaker compared to the subscales that measured traits.

Of importance is that the secondary-factor structure obtained in this study corresponds to the stability/plasticity model (DeYoung et al., 2002),

*Figure 2*

**Model 2 with standardized regression coefficients**




also known as α and β factors model (Digman, 1997). Stability (α) represents a socialization factor whereas plasticity (β) represents personal growth. Given the conceptual similarity of stability/plasticity models with those ideas dominating in individual differences research (e.g., Almagor et al., 1995; Block & Block, 1980; Eysenck, 1990; Gray & McNaughton, 2000), DeYoung et al. (2002) proposed the idea that these two factors (Big Two) reflect individual differences in two neurotransmitter systems — serotonergic and dopaminergic, respectively.

On the other hand, the secondary-factor structure of attitudes toward traits was found to be different: attitudes toward all five traits correlated between each other and thus constituted a simple one-factor structure with a moderate amount of explained variance. Therefore, one may presume that some latent general factor affects attitudes toward various traits, the factor that is different from stability and plasticity.

Presumably, in this latter case a sort of a general semantic evaluation of personality takes place which eventually results in an individual's opinions regarding *positive/negative personality*. It is possible that individuals are inclined to connect their opinions on various traits with a more general, valent, category. This category thereby establishes a relatively simple pattern of *positive* and *negative* personality. Observers' ratings of a target's personality may presumably be affected by such a pattern as well. For instance, an observing individual may evaluate a target's personality with a sort of heuristics: a bulk of various personality characteristics may be extracted from a single, well-observed, trait such as extraversion. As long as extraversion is treated by the observer as a *positive*

trait, other ostensibly positive traits are also ascribed to that target, and the target generally is rated as a *good* or *bad* person. On the other hand, in the case of self-assessment, one may presume greater variety which eventually results in a more complicated two-factor structure (Big Two) of traits.

However, this general semantic evaluation apparently contributes to variation of self-reported traits as well. Thus, a meta-analysis of Robins, Tracy, Trzesniewski, Potter and Gosling (2001) has reported that Big Five traits explained about 34% of variance in self-esteem. A higher self-esteem was found to relate with extraversion, emotional stability, conscientiousness, agreeableness and openness. This pattern was stable after control of age, sex, social class, ethnicity and nationality (US vs. non-US). Future studies may address the issue of whether attitudes toward traits mediate these relationships between traits and self-esteem. It is possible that shared variance in the Robins and colleagues' study stems from the aforementioned general semantic evaluation.

One should note that factor analysis and structural modelling findings of this study support the idea that, on the baseline level, attitudes toward traits rather establish a five-factor structure similar to that of the traits themselves. This idea is supported by the five-factor structure obtained using separate items of the BFI measuring attitudes as well as substantially better fit indices of Model 2 compared to Model 1.

Correlational analyses findings provide evidence that attitudes toward traits may relate differently with various traits. Thus, attitudes toward extraversion, openness and agreeableness correlated strongly with respective traits, attitude toward conscientiousness correlated moderately with conscientiousness, and attitude toward neuroticism correlated just weakly with neuroticism. Scatter plot analysis revealed that relatively weak correlations of neuroticism and conscientiousness may stem from substantial asymmetry of distribution of attitudes toward these traits. In other words, the vast majority of participants rated conscientiousness positively and neuroticism negatively. At the same time, the traits conscientiousness and neuroticism were distributed rather normally.

As mentioned above, McCrae and Costa (1996, 2013) treat personality traits as purely innate phenomena (basic tendencies) whereas environmental, social and ontogenetic aspects are attributed to so-called characteristic adaptations. Attitudes toward traits may be a sort of the latter. That's why, construing the models, I assumed that attitudes toward traits are, to a considerable degree, outcomes of variation in the traits themselves. Meanwhile, traits constituted two latent co-varying factors, plasticity and stability (DeYoung et al., 2002; Digman, 1997). This model was found to be quite appropriate, subject to covariation of errors of observed variables, namely five traits and corresponding attitudes.

One should also pay attention to the finding that stability traits affected attitudes toward traits substantially weaker than plasticity traits (i.e., extraversion and openness). Theoretically, plasticity determines individuals' ability to acquire new experience, whereas stability determines their ability to adapt properly and constantly to their

social environment (DeYoung et al., 2002). High plasticity individuals may be particularly sensitive to dopamine, which affects approaching behavior, positive affects onset and sensitivity to rewards (Chang, Connelly & Geeza, 2012). Therefore, establishment and functioning of attitudes toward traits may be mainly determined by personality traits that are related to acquiring new experience. This makes sense taking into account the hypothetical notion that attitudes toward traits are deemed to be relatively changeable, socially driven, ontogenetic structures.

The one-factor structure of attitudes toward traits implies that individuals have a relatively simple picture of positive and negative personality. "Positive" personality includes (in descending order of regression coefficients) conscientiousness, emotional stability, extraversion, openness to experience and agreeableness. High trait plasticity (extraversion and openness) predicts herein more positive attitudes to the aforementioned configuration.

Several circumstances determine the limitations of the study. First, the sample group comprised predominantly young people. Therefore, it remains unclear whether the findings obtained can be replicated using samples of any other age. Second, the BFI's measurement of attitudes toward traits has demonstrated rather moderate internal consistency. Moreover, the item numbers (and hence content of average values) differ from the convenient version of the BFI compared to that measuring attitudes. This apparently generated supplementary error variance while measuring relationships between focal constructs. Third, the study presented is cross-sectional and hence is a first step towards the understanding the role of attitudes toward traits. To date, both the theoretical and applied utilities of the construct, its power to contribute considerably to variation in different behavioral and mental phenomena, remains deeply unclear.

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*Appendix*

**Correlations between personality traits (measured with IPIP and BFI) and attitudes toward traits (N = 1079)**

| | M | SD | Traits (IPIP) | | | | Traits (BFI) | | | | | Attitudes toward traits (BFI) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | A | C | N | O | E | A | C | N | O | E | A | C | N | O |
| **$IPIP_{traits}$** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| E | 3.34 | 0.86 | .38*** | 0.05 | -.06* | .32*** | .83*** | .10** | .12*** | -.16*** | .32*** | .47*** | 0.04 | .10** | -.09** | .20*** |
| A | 3.88 | 0.59 | | .18*** | .06* | .25*** | .30*** | .56*** | .22*** | 0.01 | .36*** | .29*** | .45*** | .12*** | -.10** | .32*** |
| C | 3.35 | 0.7 | | | -.17*** | 0.02 | 0.02 | .22*** | .75*** | -.15*** | -0.02 | 0.04 | .10** | .32*** | -.06* | -0.02 |
| N[1] | 3.1 | 0.92 | | | | 0.01 | -.08** | -.28*** | -.17*** | .82*** | .07* | -0.03 | 0.02 | 0.01 | .14*** | .10** |
| O | 3.7 | 0.57 | | | | | .35*** | 0.01 | .09** | -.06* | .71*** | .09** | -0.01 | 0.02 | -.13*** | .44*** |
| **$IPIP_{traits}$** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| E | 3.38 | 0.71 | | | | | | 0.03 | .10** | -.19*** | .34*** | .44*** | -0.02 | .09** | -.09** | .19*** |
| A | 3.47 | 0.58 | | | | | | | .26*** | -.29*** | .12*** | .14*** | .49*** | 0.04 | -0.03 | .12*** |
| C | 3.34 | 0.65 | | | | | | | | -.15*** | 0.05 | .10** | .09** | .33*** | -0.05 | 0.01 |
| N | 3.06 | 0.73 | | | | | | | | | -0.02 | -.07* | 0.02 | 0.02 | 0.13 | 0.04 |
| O | 3.76 | 0.64 | | | | | | | | | | .12*** | .11*** | -0.01 | -.08* | .58*** |
| **$BFI_{attitudes}$** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| E | 4.17 | 0.47 | | | | | | | | | | | .16*** | .27*** | -.26*** | .26*** |
| A | 3.93 | 0.52 | | | | | | | | | | | | .19*** | -.24*** | .15*** |
| C | 4.51 | 0.37 | | | | | | | | | | | | | -.39*** | .22*** |
| N | 1.76 | 0.43 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | -.20*** |
| O | 4.29 | 0.45 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

[1] The term *emotional stability*, used in IPIP, was replaced here by *neuroticism*, and signs of respective correlations were reversed in order to unify IPIP and BFI results.

*Note*. IPIP — International Personality Items Pool (Goldberg, 2001; Kniazev et al., 2010); BFI — Big Five Inventory (John et al., 1991; John et al., 2008); M — means, SD — standard deviations, E — extraversion, A — agreeableness, C — conscientiousness, N — neuroticism, O — openness, *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

# «Лучший человек в мире»: установки на черты личности

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## Резюме

Целью исследования были теоретическое обоснование и первичная оценка эмпирической пригодности конструкта установок на черты личности. Установки на черты личности рассматриваются в качестве дополнительной характеристики к традиционным чертам. В этой связи возникает второе измерение черт, которое характеризует каждую черту на альтернативном уровне социальных установок. Методологически проблема решалась в рамках диспозиционального подхода Большой Пятерки. В исследовании показана психометрическая пригодность русскоязычной версии вопросника Big Five Inventory (BFI; John et al., 1991, 2008). Для измерения установок на черты личности BFI был модифицирован в части инструкций, шкалы и формулировок пунктов. Эмпирические данные были получены на выборке в 1079 человек. BFI как для измерения черт, так и для измерения установок на черты показал приемлемые значения внутренней согласованности, конструктной, конвергентной и дивергентной валидности. Вторичная факторная структура подшкал BFI при измерении черт соответствовала модели стабильности/пластичности (DeYoung et al., 2002). Напротив, при измерении установок на черты личности была получена однофакторная вторичная структура подшкал BFI. В то время как экстраверсия, доброжелательность и открытость сильно коррелировали с соответствующими установками, добросовестность коррелировала умеренно, а нейротизм — слабо. Были протестированы две альтернативные модели общей структуры черт и установок на черты личности. Оказалась пригодной та модель, которая предполагает ковариацию остатков черт с соответствующими установками. В статье обсуждаются ограничения и перспективы исследования.

**Ключевые слова:** Большая Пятерка, структура личности, социальные установки.