



## Validation of the four-profile configuration of personality types within the Five-Factor Model



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### ABSTRACT

Prototypes of personality traits derived from the Five-Factor Model of personality were developed using Latent Profile Analysis. Trait configurations and predictive outcomes suggested the appropriateness of a four-profile solution over the commonly identified three-profile solution. However, comparisons of model fit and predictive ability with previous investigations suggest that the profiles presently developed are less precise than those using the alternative Six-Factor Model of personality. Accordingly, results indicate that the additional trait within the Six-Factor Model provides critical information in profile development. The authors argue that, regardless of whether the Five-Factor or Six-Factor Model of personality is used, the four-profile solution reflects a comprehensive framework for describing coherent and theoretically meaningful profiles.

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A growing body of research in personality psychology has focused on personality types (e.g., Asendorpf, Borkenau, Ostendorf, & van Aken, 2001). In contrast to the 'variable-centred' approach, which describes differences across individuals with particular variables as the primary units of measurement, research on personality types examines configurations of traits within the individual. This latter approach accounts for the whole person engaged with their environment, and thus provides a more coherent explanation of personality functioning (Donnellan & Robins, 2010). Moreover, by identifying subsets of individuals with similar configurations of traits, researchers may be able to gain greater insight into the underlying mechanisms that produce both within-person variation and between-person differences across the observed dimensions.

Block and Block's (1980) model of ego-control and ego-resiliency is often advanced as a theoretical framework for understanding and interpreting personality types (Asendorpf et al., 2001). Individual differences in ego-control reflect the tendency to control or inhibit impulses and desires, whereas varying levels of ego-resiliency are grounded in the flexibility of responding styles, and reflect levels of well-adjusted functioning. These self-regulatory constructs generate emotional and behavioural patterns, which may be expressed within configurations of personality dimensions (Gramzow, Sedikides, & Panter, 2004).

Consistent with Block and Block's (1980) theoretical framework, a recent investigation (Isler, Liu, Sibley, & Fletcher, 2016) identified a four-profile solution of high/low resilient/control personality trait configurations within a large, longitudinal national probability sample. These profiles demonstrated strong longitudinal stability, and a pattern of relationships consistent with Block and Block's (1980) ego-constructs. Specifically, high/low resilient profiles differed primarily on adaptive vs. maladaptive outcomes whereas high/low control profiles differed on interpersonal motivational values related to inhibition, pleasure focus and pursuit of new experiences.

In contrast to this study (Isler et al., 2016), much prior research has converged on a three-profile solution of traits (e.g., Asendorpf et al., 2001; Meeus, Van de Schoot, Klimstra, & Branje, 2011), leading many to conclude that the three major 'replicable' personality prototypes are undercontrol, resilient, and overcontrol types. Advocates of this model suggest that the three-profile structures converge on a curvilinear relationship between low-adjustment and both extremes of the control dimension (Asendorpf et al., 2001).

However, the three type solution has not always been found (e.g., Rammstedt, Riemann, Angleitner, & Borkenau, 2004), and even when three profiles are reported, the configurations are often inconsistent across studies (see Herzberg & Roth, 2006). Donnellan and Robins (2010) suggested that the lack of replicability may be a product, in part, of different analytic procedures and sampling biases, including low sample sizes and non-representative sampling methods. Moreover, the three-profile model may overlook important theoretical distinctions between profiles outlined within a four-profile model (see Gramzow et

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al., 2004). For example, the four-profile solution reported by Isler et al. (2016) is elegantly consistent with Block and Block's (1980) model of self-regulatory processes, and underlines the adaptive qualities within both control tendencies.

Unfortunately, comparisons between the four-profile solution identified by Isler et al. (2016) and prior research are complicated by the number of traits considered. Specifically, most previous investigations utilize the Five-Factor Model of personality, whereas Isler et al. (2016) included Honesty-humility as an additional sixth trait in profile development. As suggested by Asendorpf et al. (2001), the number and structure of different personality configurations may, in part, be a function of the number and nature of the traits assessed. Consequently, it is necessary to directly assess the theoretical interpretability and predictive ability of the four-profile solution within the commonly tested Five-Factor Model to promote cross-study comparisons. Moreover, the extent to which the Five-Factor Model provides a sufficient foundation for profile development can be assessed by comparing the resultant outcomes to those developed using six-traits (Isler et al., 2016). To accomplish this, the current investigation considered the theoretical and empirical interpretability of the three- and four-profile solutions of personality profiles within the Five-Factor Model, using the same procedures, and examining the same sample, as initially tested by Isler et al. (2016). Analyses were conducted to examine model fit, interpretability, and predictive ability, of both three- and four-profile solutions.

The following three predictions were advanced:

1. A four profile solution, interpretable in terms of Block and Block's (1980) self-regulatory constructs, will emerge when using the Five-Factor Model of personality;
2. A four-profile solution will provide superior predictions, than a three-profile model, in relevant outcome variables linked to a) adaptive/maladaptive functioning and b) inhibited/unconstrained motivational styles;
3. The loss of information represented within the Five-Factor, as opposed to the Six-Factor Model, will correspond to a reduction in the interpretability and predictive strength of personality profiles.

## 1. Method

### 1.1. Sample

We analysed responses from 6518 individuals who participated in Wave 1 of the New Zealand Values and Attitudes Survey (NZAVS). Participants were randomly sampled from the New Zealand electoral role. Females represented the majority of participants (59.3%) and mean age of the respondents was 47.91 ( $SD = 15.73$ ).

### 1.2. Measures

For detailed information regarding item development, refer to Sibley (2009). All items were measured on a 7 point Likert scale, excluding 'Satisfaction with Life' items, which were measured on a 10 point Likert scale, and Schwartz's (1992) values, which were measured on a 9 point Likert scale.

#### 1.2.1. Personality

Participants completed the 5 factor 20-item Mini-IPIP (Donnellan, Frederick, Oswald, & Lucas, 2006). An exploratory factor analysis demonstrated that items loaded strongly onto the appropriate factors, while internal consistency reliability values for each factor were high, given the small number of items: Openness ( $\alpha = 0.67$ ), Agreeableness ( $\alpha = 0.67$ ), Extraversion ( $\alpha = 0.71$ ), Conscientiousness ( $\alpha = 0.65$ ), and Emotional Stability ( $\alpha = 0.64$ ).

#### 1.2.2. Subjective wellbeing

Nine items targeting subjective wellbeing were measured (details below). Internal consistency for the scale was high ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ). Z-scores were calculated and averaged to provide a total score.

- a. *Self-Esteem*: three items from Rosenberg (1965).
- b. *Personal Wellbeing*: four items from Cummins, Eckersley, Pallant, van Vugt, and Misajon (2003).
- c. *Satisfaction with Life*: two items from Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985).

#### 1.2.3. Social dominance orientation

Participants completed six items from the Social Dominance Orientation scale (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Internal consistency reliability for this scale ( $\alpha = 0.69$ ) was good.

#### 1.2.4. Perceived quality of interethnic relations

Single-item scales measuring perceptions of realistic (Bobo, 1998) and symbolic (Stephan et al., 2002) threat to New Zealanders in general were repeated four times in reference to different ethnic groups (Maori, NZ Europeans, Pacific Islanders, Asians). Internal consistency was high for both realistic ( $\alpha = 0.83$ ) and symbolic ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ) threat, and items were averaged to produce total scores. Three additional single-item measures were then included (details below). Given the few items, internal reliability for the 5 item scale was good ( $\alpha = 0.66$ ). Items were averaged to produce a total score.

- a. *Racial essentialism*: No et al. (2008).
- b. *Intergroup anxiety*: adapted by Sibley and Barlow (2009); cited in Sibley (2009) from Stephan and Stephan (1985).
- c. *Race-based rejection sensitivity*: adapted by Sibley and Barlow (2009); cited in Sibley (2009) from Shelton and Richeson (2005).

#### 1.2.5. Self-enhancement and openness to change values

Participants completed a 12-item measure of Schwartz's (1992) values, adapted by Stern, Guagnano, and Dietz (1998). For the current analyses, we only consider the Openness to Change and the Self-Enhancement items. Given the small number of items, internal consistency reliability was high for both Openness to Change ( $\alpha = 0.73$ ), and Self Enhancement ( $\alpha = 0.61$ ) values.

### 1.3. Procedure

We developed and assessed three- and four-profile solutions using Latent Profile Analyses of participants' responses to the Five-Factor Model trait measures using MPLUS software (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). We compared the two different solutions by considering fit indices and examining trait configurations from a theoretical framework. Following this, we calculated the proportions of participants represented by each profile, and analysed demographic information by regressing probability of class membership for each personality profile on age, sex and income simultaneously. After controlling for demographic information, we regressed each of the three and four-solution profiles on subjective wellbeing, perceived quality of interethnic relations, Social Dominance Orientation, and Self-Enhancement and Openness to Change values. Finally, we compared mean-level differences relating to each of the five outcome variables using a series of ANOVAs.

## 2. Results

### 2.1. Model fit

Latent Profile Analysis provides multiple tools to consider and compare model fit and interpretability. Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC;

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