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## The five-factor model in schizotypal personality disorder

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### Abstract

Studies of the five-factor model of personality in schizotypal personality disorder (SPD) have produced inconsistent results, particularly with respect to openness. In the present study, the NEO-FFI was used to measure five-factor personality dimensions in 28 community volunteers with SPD and 24 psychiatrically healthy individuals. Standard multivariate statistical analyses were used to evaluate personality differences as a function of diagnosis and gender. Individuals with SPD had significantly higher levels of neuroticism and significantly lower levels of extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness than those without SPD. Female, but not male, SPD subjects had significantly higher openness levels than their healthy counterparts, and this gender-specific group difference persisted when SPD symptom severity was statistically controlled. These findings suggest that gender-associated differences in openness may account for prior inconsistent findings regarding this dimension, and they further underscore the importance of examining gender effects in future studies of SPD.

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### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. The five-factor model

Personality description and classification systems can be grouped into those that delineate distinct categorical entities based upon specific features, and those that attribute individual differences to variation along one or more continuous dimensions. Axis II of the

DSM-IV exemplifies the former approach, and the five-factor model is a widely known example of the latter. The five-factor model is well replicated across instruments and over time (John and Srivastava, 1999), and posits that variation along broad personality dimensions (the so-called ‘Big Five’) accounts for most inter-individual personality differences (Digman, 1990). Until recently, investigations of categorical and dimensional personality models have proceeded along mutually independent lines of research, reflecting their origins in clinical psychiatry and academic psychology, respectively (Lenzenweger and Clarkin, 1996).

A widely used measure of the Big Five dimensions is the NEO Personality Inventory (Costa and McCrae, 1992), which defines each dimension in terms of related attributes, or facets. Thus, individuals who score high on neuroticism are tense, irritable, dissatisfied, shy, moody and lacking self-confidence. High extraversion indicates an individual who is sociable, forceful (assertive), energetic, adventurous, enthusiastic, and outgoing. High openness individuals are curious, imaginative, artistic, excitable, unconventional, and have wide interests. High agreeableness individuals are forgiving, not demanding, warm, compliant (not stubborn), modest (not show-offs), and sympathetic. High conscientiousness indicates someone who is efficient, organized, dutiful (not careless), thorough, self-disciplined (not lazy), and deliberate (not impulsive).

### *1.2. The five-factor model and personality disorders*

The conceptual gap between dimensional constructs of “normal” personality and clinically based categorical classifications of abnormal personality was bridged empirically by Wiggins and Pincus (1989), who demonstrated that the five-factor model accounts for much of the variance in personality disorder (PD) diagnoses. Similar results were obtained subsequently by others. For example, using several different PD measures in a community sample, Costa and McCrae (1990) concluded that the five-factor model accounts for the “major dimensions underlying personality disorder”. In another study (Blais, 1997), clinicians used five-factor model trait descriptions to rate their own patients who met DSM-IV diagnostic criteria for one or more PDs and obtained results

similar to those reported by Wiggins and Pincus (1989).

Based upon a review of these and other studies, Dyce (1997) concluded that high neuroticism is typical of PDs generally, whereas openness may be elevated in some (e.g., narcissistic and histrionic) but low in others (e.g., schizoid). In undergraduates schizotypal personality disorder (SPD) scores were positively related to neuroticism and openness, and negatively related to extraversion and agreeableness (Dyce and O’Connor, 1998). Morey et al. (2002) examined the five-factor model in patients with borderline, avoidant, obsessive–compulsive, and schizotypal PDs and found that they shared a common pattern of above-average neuroticism and below-average extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness; openness was elevated in all subgroups except avoidant PD. A limitation of that study is that subjects with major mood disorders were not excluded.

### *1.3. The five-factor model in schizotypal personality disorder*

Among clinical PDs, SPD is least accounted for by the five-factor model (Stone, 1993; Lynam and Widiger, 2001), possibly because it lacks a dimension related to aberrant cognition (Costa and McCrae, 1990). Studies of the relationship between five-factor model traits and SPD have also yielded inconsistent results, which may reflect differences in personality and PD measures, analytic methods, and types of populations sampled (Dyce, 1997).

Perhaps the most controversial issue in research on SPD and the five-factor model is the role of openness (Ross et al., 2002). Morey et al. (2002) found that openness was elevated in patients with SPD, but other studies found no relationship (Trull, 1992; Yeung et al., 1993; Blais, 1997). Schizotypy is positively correlated with openness in college students (Wiggins and Pincus, 1989; Coolidge et al., 1994), but Tien et al. (1992) reported that it is negatively related to openness in a community sample, and others (Costa and McCrae, 1990) found that openness is unrelated or negatively related to SPD depending on the PD measure used.

Generally, studies reporting a positive relation between openness and SPD symptoms have used college student samples, whereas those failing to

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