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# Extraversion, psychoticism, sensation seeking and field dependence–independence: Will the true relationship please reveal itself?

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## Abstract

In this paper, we look at the way key personality traits might interact. Specifically, we investigate whether performance on a standard task assessing the cognitive style of Field Dependence–Independence, the Group Embedded Figures Task (GEFT), is a function of an Extraversion (E)  $\times$  Psychoticism (P) interaction. This hypothesis was evaluated using data gathered from two research projects conducted in our lab, and published in this Journal. We further explored the trait of sensation seeking, given that both impulsivity and sensation seeking map onto the E  $\times$  P plane. We did find such an E  $\times$  P interaction for the GEFT score in Study 1, but only for a particular age group of young adults, and could replicate this finding in Study 2. This disordinal interaction indicates that both non-impulsive (E–P–) and high sensation-seeking (E+P+) participants could be characterized as being field independent (FI). We discuss these findings and their implications for our understanding of impulsivity and sensation seeking.

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*Keywords:* Personality; Psychoticism; Extraversion; Field dependence–independence; Sensation seeking; Impulsivity

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## 1. Introduction

As an *organizing factor* underlying behaviour—being relatively stable, having either a psychological underpinning or resulting from a social construction—and one which necessarily *interacts* with situational variables, a personality *trait*, or dimension, is a Gestalt notion. Furthermore, the various traits must necessarily interact with each other, if they constitute a system (cf. Allport, 1961). What import does this have for the Eysenckian Big Three (Eysenck, 1994)? In particular, what is to be gained from considering a Psychoticism (P)  $\times$  Extraversion (E) interaction? To answer this, we need to go back more than 20 years, to a short statement made by Eysenck (1982) as part of his book review of Witkin's final contribution to the literature (Witkin & Goodenough, 1981).

In that review, Eysenck (1982) expressed his dismay at the fact that the Eysenckian conception of Extraversion (E) had not been discussed in connection with the Witkinian conception of Field Dependence–Independence (FDI). It was Eysenck's view that extraverts should be field dependent (Eysenck, 1982, 1983). Fine (1983, 1991), on the other hand, has assumed that there is no correlation between these measures, enabling him to explore both extraversion and FDI, in a  $2 \times 2$  design (Fine & Danforth, 1975; Fine & Kobrick, 1976). In our own recent work, we have found that E, derived from the *Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised*, short version (*EPQ-R-S*; Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barrett, 1985), and performance on the Group Embedded Figures Task (GEFT; Witkin, Oltman, Raskin, & Karp, 1971), which is one of the standard measures of FDI, was negligible: For a group of 87 male security personnel,  $r = -.01$  (Glicksohn & Bozna, 2000); for 65 married couples, comprising a group of 129 participants (1 case dropped due to missing values),  $r = .01$  (Glicksohn & Golan, 2001).

When a hypothesized correlation is not in evidence, one evidently has to revise the hypothesis. Eysenck (1983) suggested that it is probably the factor of impulsivity, previously subsumed under E (and now subsumed under psychoticism—cf. H. J. Eysenck et al., 1993, 1994), and not the sociability factor currently defining E, which is the key trait similar to field dependence. If psychoticism (P) is implicated, then it would be a simple matter for investigation. But again, the correlations in our own studies are negligible (Glicksohn & Bozna (2000),  $r = .08$ ; Glicksohn & Golan (2001),  $r = .08$ ).

Note, however, that such pairwise correlations only relate to part of the story. It might be more fruitful to look at the effect of the *interaction* of the traits in question—a point stressed previously by Eysenck (1994, p. 158). Going back to Eysenck's (1983) suggestion that the trait of impulsivity is that which is implicated, and recalling that impulsivity is inherently related to *both* E and P (H. J. Eysenck et al., 1993; S. B. G. Eysenck, 1993), then surely a more interesting hypothesis would be that performance on the GEFT is a function of the  $E \times P$  interaction. We investigated the hypothesis within the data gathered from two research projects conducted in our lab, and published in this Journal. In the first data set, we could also explore the trait of sensation seeking, recalling that both impulsivity and sensation seeking map onto the  $E \times P$  plane (Zuckerman, 1994). Furthermore, there is an interesting relationship—both theoretically and historically—between FDI and Sensation Seeking, as we now discuss.

Views on the relationship between the personality trait of Sensation Seeking (Zuckerman, 1994) and the cognitive style of FDI (Witkin & Goodenough, 1981) were in the process of being developed during the '60s. A major issue facing researchers then was whether one could predict indi-

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